AUSTRALIA'S CRIME AND MYSTERY MAGAZINE

ISSUE 7 AUGUST 1992 $5

Mean STREETS

SALE PRICE $2

PATRICIA CORNWELL
ON BODIES, BOOKS AND VIOLENCE

GEORGES SIMENON
CREATOR OF MAIGRET

STONE COLD SOBER—
DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND P.I.S

INTERVIEWS
SUE GRAFTON
JEAN BEDFORD
JULIAN SYMONS

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CRIME

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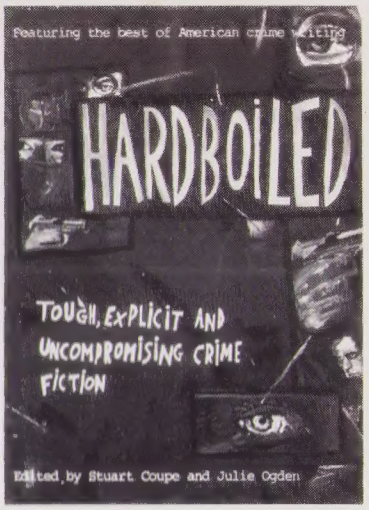
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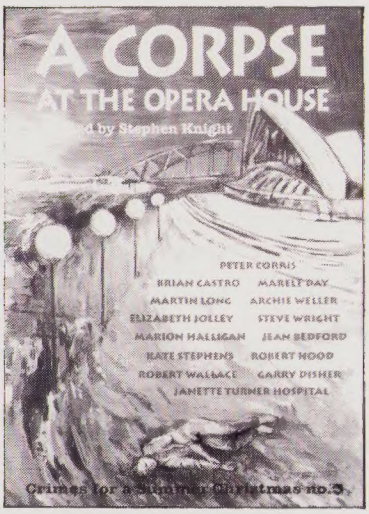

A CORPSE AT THE OPERA HOUSE

Crimes for a Summer Christmas no. 3

EDITED BY STEPHEN KNIGHT

Fourteen of Australia's top writers have developed their own stories around the theme of 'a corpse at the Opera House'. Including—Peter Corris, Brian Castro, Elizabeth Jolley, Archie Weller, Marele Day, Garry Disher and Janette Turner Hospital.

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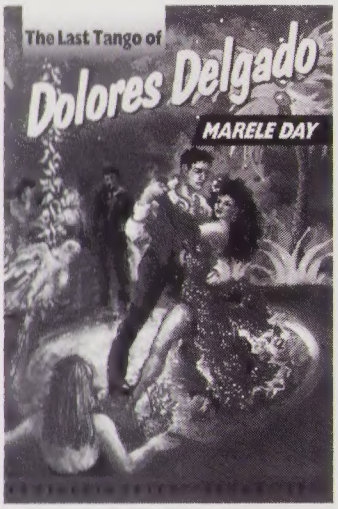

THE LAST TANGO OF DOLORES DELGADO

Another Claudia Valentine adventure

MARELE DAY

Being a minder was no trouble at all for Claudia Valentine. Her charge, Dolores, slept all morning, shopped all afternoon and danced all night—until she dropped dead. Claudia had never lost a client before. This was not going to enhance her resumé.

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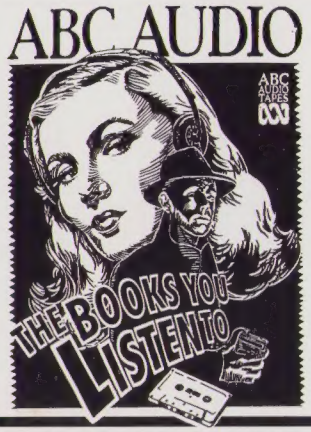

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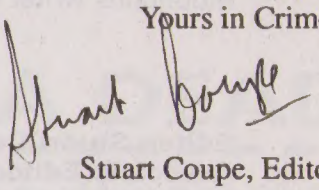
MEAN STREETS

A Quarterly Journal of Crime, Mystery and Detection

Here we are again - late as usual! But this time we have a pretty damn good excuse. The impending child that I mentioned in the last editorial is now a very present daughter, Sara. She arrived rather earlier than we expected, in fact soon after issue 6 hence the delay in some readers getting their copies. Julie did her best to wrap them as fast as possible - no easy task when you're sitting in a hospital bed with a new baby on one side and half a dozen boxes of Mean Streets on the other. The nurses thought it very odd. Anyway, amidst the chaos, here's number 7 and we're going to do our darnest to get number 8 out before Christmas. In this issue you'll find interviews with Patricia D. Cornwell (who's just been in Australia for a promotional visit), Sue Grafton, Jean Bedford and controversial English critic (and acclaimed novelist) Julian Symons. There's also a feature on drugs and alcohol in the detective novel, a lengthy look at Georges Simenon, the creator of Maigret, and Cape Fear videos to be won. At this point I'll get in the first of many plugs for *Hardboiled,* the anthology of contemporary American crime fiction that Julie and I have edited. It's available through Allen & Unwin and no Mean Streets reader should be without a copy!!!

Yours in Crime,



Stuart Coupe, Editor

THANKS -

For their support and contributions we'd like to thank:Peter Doyle, Roderic Campbell, Pauline Smith, Phil Edwards, Jeff Popple, Chet Williamson, Graeme Flanagan, Stephen Wright, Robert Hood, David Kibble, Sally 'Let's strike a deal' Fricker, Monica Joyce, Patrick Gallagher, Nikki 'Sweetcheeks' Christer, Michael and Stephanie at Wakefield Press, Tony Thorne, Theo and Tess at Apex.

And remember, in the words of James Ellroy - "Crime Fiction Rules, Other Fiction Drools."

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I is for Inocent is the ninth Kinsey Millhone book. Grafton only has another 17 to go before she hits Z which she says will stand for Zero.

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Phil Edwards takes a look at the original version of Cape Fear and compares it to Scorsese's controversial remake.

MEAN STREETS

A Quarterly Journal of Crime, Mystery and Detection

"The realist in murder writes of a world in which gangsters can rule nations and almost rule cities, in which hotels and apartment houses and celebrated restaurants are owned by men who make their money out of brothels, in which a screen star can be the fingerman for a mob, and the nice man down the hall is a boss of a numbers racket; a world where a judge with a cellar full of bootleg liquor can send a man to jail for having a pint in his pocket, where the mayor of your town may have condoned murder as an instrument of money-making, where no man can walk down a dark street in safety because law and order are things we talk about but refrain from practicing; a world where you may witness a hold-up in broad daylight and see who did it, but you will fade quickly back into the crowd rather than tell anyone, because the hold-up men may have friends with long guns, or the police may not like your testimony, and in any case the shyster for the defence will be allowed to abuse and vilify you in open court, before a jury of selected morons, without any but the most perfunctory interference from a political judge.

"It is not a very fragrant world, but it is the world we live in, and certain writers with tough minds and a cool spirit of detachment can make very interesting and even amusing patterns out of it. It is not funny that a man should be killed, but it is sometimes funny that he should be killed for so little, and that his death should be the coin of what we call civilization."

Raymond Chandler -
The Simple Art Of Murder, 1950.

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Editor: Stuart Coupe
Associate Editor: Julie Ogden
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THE CRIMINALLY BIG BOOK GIVE-AWAY

The Mean Streets office is beginning to look like a bookshop so we've decided to clear the shelves and offer new subscribers a huge selection of titles. Here's the deal - subscribe to Mean Streets (four issues) for $25 and select one of the following titles FREE. Additional titles can be purchased for only $5 per book (plus $2 per book postage). We have heaps of some titles and only a few of others so list as many preferences as possible.

(1) KINKY FRIEDMAN - A CASE OF LONE STAR (First edition, hardback)
(2) ROBERT ENGLISH - WAIT TILL HOLLY COMES
(3) ELIZABETH GEORGE - PAYMENT IN BLOOD
(4) JOHN CARROLL - TROPIC OF FEAR
(5) STEPHEN KNIGHT (ED) - MORE CRIMES FOR A SUMMER CHRISTMAS
(6) STEPHEN KNIGHT (ED) - CRIMES FOR A SUMMER CHRISTMAS
(7) THE ULTIMATE MYSTERY - NOT A BOOK TITLE!! We select a book. It may be from the list above - it may not!! You take the risk!

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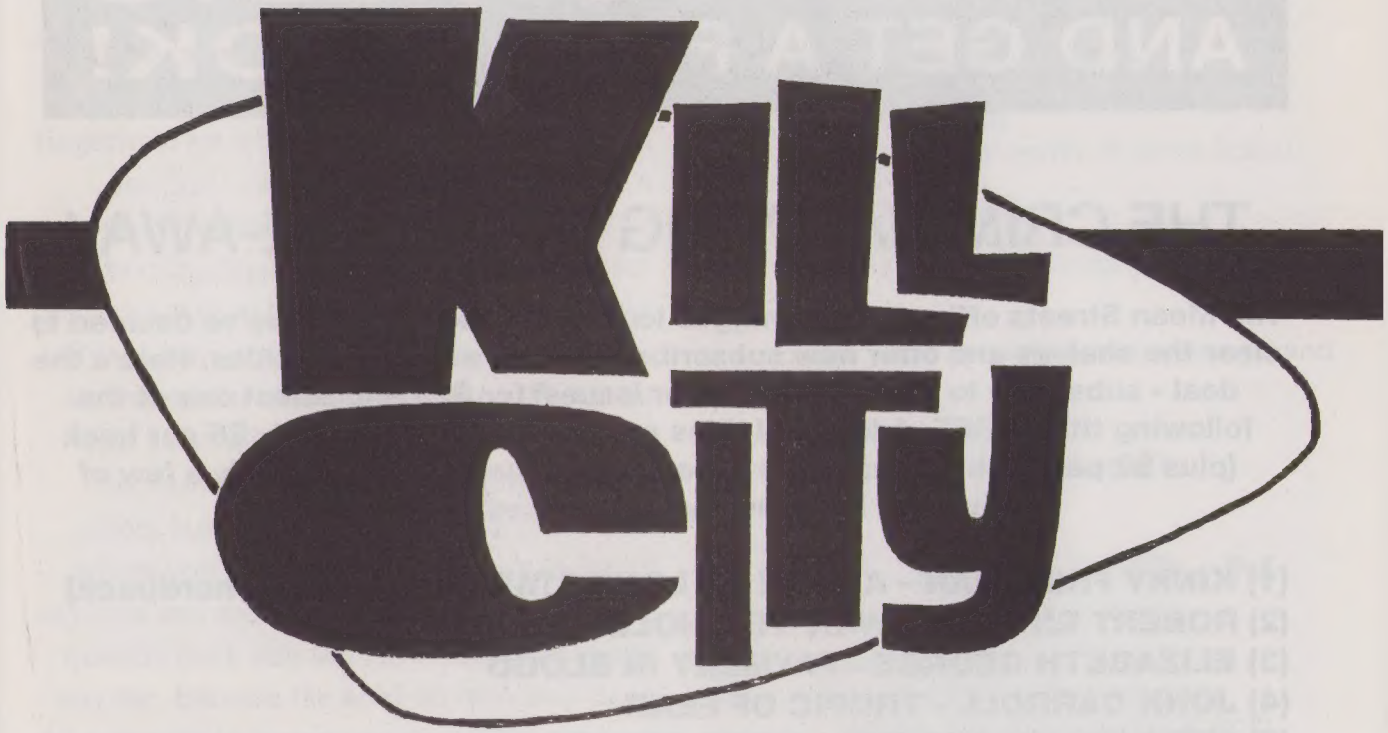

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DEBATABLE DOGMA

Editor,

I read the piece on Harry Whittington with some amusement. He slates crime writers who say they never know how a story is going to end, that they are like a magician walking on stage without knowing if he will draw a rabbit or dove or anything at all out of his hat.

I've had 40 novels published, over 300 short stories in magazines all around the world, written for American and British film and television, won six or seven awards (forgive all this chest-beating), and rarely did I know the ending of any script when I sat down to start it, or often, even when I was halfway through it. I let the ending grow out of the characters. Of course, in the second draft, there would be some shaping, but that was part of one's craft.

If I was so "amateurish", as Whittington describes such a method, gee, I wonder how I'd have gone if I'd been "professional". I'm beginning to think that crime writers spout as much debatable dogma as theologians.

Sincerely,

Jon Cleary,
Kirribilli, NSW

VOTE 1 ELLROY

Editor,

Many thanks for *Mean Streets* and good luck with it.

Unfortunately Ellroy is the only crime writer I've found I like. None of the others remotely reach his standards. I'll keep trying.

Thanks again,

Bob Carr
Leader Of The Opposition
Lesgislative Assembly Of New South Wales

PHRYNE'S WARDROBE

Editors,

I'd like to take the opportunity to congratulate you both on your wonderful magazine. I have been a crime and mystery fan for many years, my favourite authors ranging from Dorothy L. Sayers and P.D. James to Len Deighton. Although I am fairly well entrenched in the classic whodunnit genre, I have dabbled in meaner works and enjoyed them.

Two of my recent favourite authors have been Kerry Greenwood and Jennifer Rowe. I work with vintage clothes and find Greenwood's descriptions of Phryne Fisher's wardrobe both accurate and enticing. I wonder if she is a collector of vintage clothes or a thorough researcher? Jennifer Rowe I enjoy as she has truly revived the classic whodunnit albeit in a very modern and Australian way.

Yours in crime,

Erika Langereis,
Bondi, NSW

CRIME FOR ALL

Editor,

I agree with your correspondent, Carol Richardson, (letters MS 6) in disliking 'My Dead Dog Bobby', but I have not detected any anti-women overtones in your magazine. On the contrary it has introduced me to many women crime writers (including feminist and lesbian writers) I might otherwise have missed. Your articles about writers of the sick and violent type don't appeal to me, either, but I just skim through them. I'm a reader of the old school who looks to crime fiction as an escape from real life, but I know many of your readers enjoy other styles and you have to cater for all tastes.

One of your appreciative subscribers,

Judith Sterling,
Coogee, NSW

INSIPID CRIME

Editor,

I think the magazine is great. The piece on Ellroy in Issue 3 was enough to sell me on it. I'm delighted to see an interview with Carl Hiaasen in Issue 5. If Ellroy has a rival, it's Hiaasen. They, Andrew Vachss and Tony Hillerman make the crime-writing poms look pretty insipid, in my view, Ditto, unfortunately, most Australians working in the genre.

Good luck with the magazine, I look forward to future issues.

Laurie Oakes
Canberra, ACT.

PET HATE

Editor,

As a pistol dealer my pet hate is reading novels in which someone snicks off the safety catch of a revolver. Revolvers don't have safety catches! Offenders include Elmore Leonard, Garry Disher and Robert Wallace.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Guy Grant,
Devonport, Tasmania

LETTERS

A RARE FIND

Editor,

Thank you very much for featuring myself and my private eye, Dan Kruger, in Issue 6 of *Mean Streets*. I'm honoured and flattered to be included in such an interesting, provocative, and FUN magazine. Wish we had something like it in the States. It's rare to receive a magazine of any kind that compels one to read it from cover to cover. And rare to find a magazine that discusses writers like Crumley, Izzi, Vachss, and Ellroy as the masters they are. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

Michael Cormany,
Chicago, Illinois

PS- For what it's worth, I agree with you 100 percent. If Chandler isn't the worst PI novel ever written I hope to God I never encounter one that's worse.

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Australian horror fiction? Not much of it around, is there?

Of course, the works of Stephen King, Clive Barker, Dean Koontz, Richard Laymon, Anne Rice, James Herbert and a host of other overseas writers appear in every bookstore.

But where's the Australian horror fiction?

One place it can be found is here, in this new anthology of ORIGINAL horror fiction from some of Australia's best genre writers. Many of them have made their name in genres other than horror: Peter Corris is Australia's best-known crime writer; Terry Dowling is one of our highest profile and most honoured SF/fantasy writers; Robert Hood is an award-winning writer of short crime fiction with a good track record in horror/fantasy as well; Sean McMullen, Sean Williams, Rosaleen Love and Geoffrey Maloney are all fast earning a reputation as top practitioners within SF and fantasy fields; Sue Isle, Steven Proposch and A.G. Clarke are all relative newcomers, but their futures look bright. The editor of *Intimate Armageddons*, Bill Congreve, is himself emerging as a fine horror writer.

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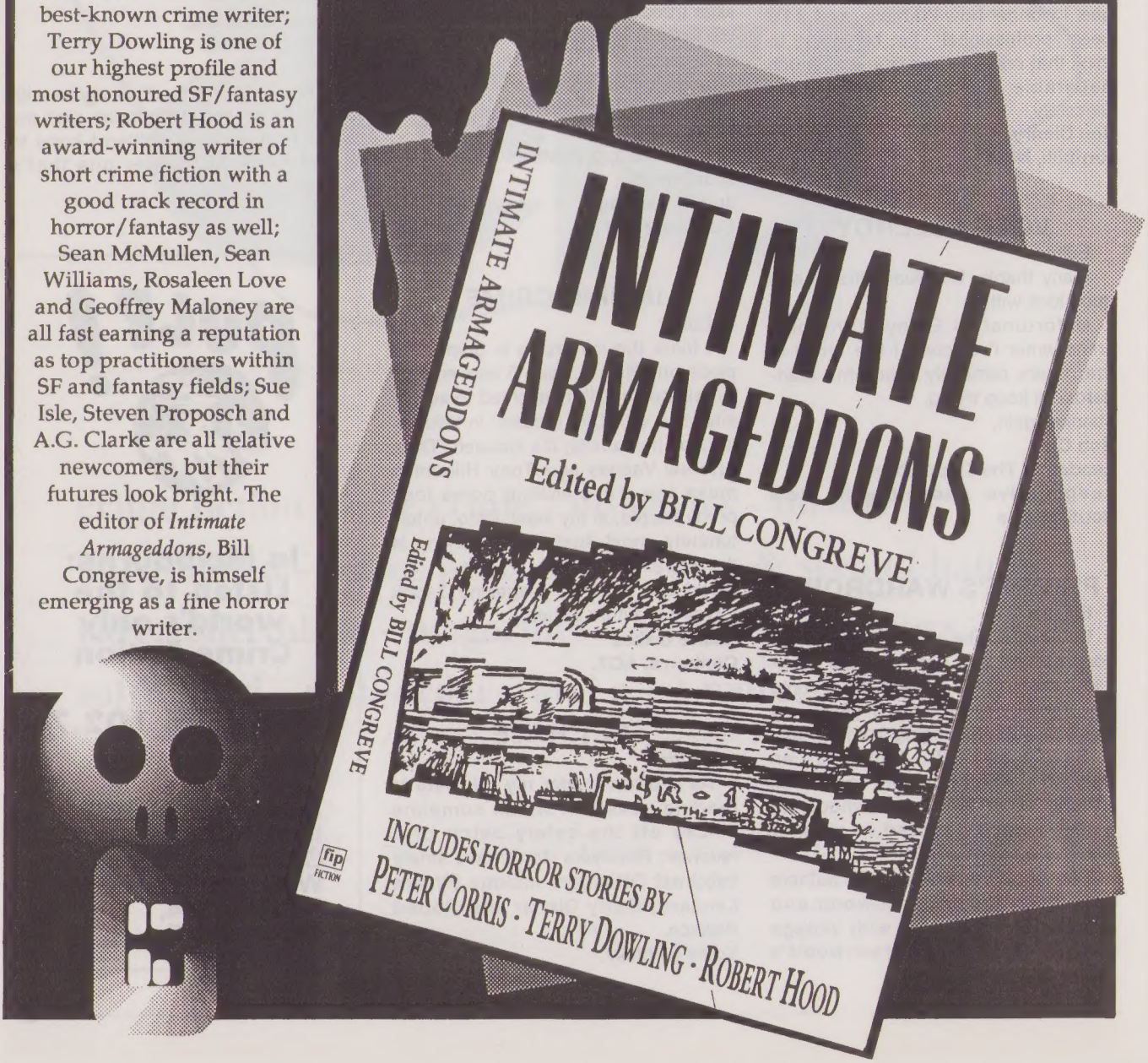
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INCLUDES HORROR STORIES BY
PETER CORRIS · TERRY DOWLING · ROBERT HOOD

Roy Montgomery in *Gumshoe*

GUMSHOE

Now here's a neat little documentary that *Mean Streets* readers will want to keep an eye out for. Written and Directed by Malcolm McDonald, *Gumshoe* looks at the work of four real Australian private eyes working in various aspects of the gumshoes' trade. There's Warren Mallard who does insurance surveillance work, debugging and domestic surveillance, and Peter Royle whose speciality is missing persons. He's particularly adept at track down missing teens. Michael Oliver, perhaps the hardest case of all, is a debt collector whose approach is chilling, while Les is an expert in insurance surveillance.

***Gumshoe* is surprisingly entertaining, given what is basically an often excrutiatingly dull job. Remember most PIs spend their time sitting in cars and vans, hoping to spot somebody with a supposed injury, giving the game away. At just on the hour mark, *Gumshoe* is fast moving and, given the various characters of the four private eyes, provides a varied and often very funny peep into a world romanticised in fiction to a very large degree.**

The highlights of *Gumshoe* are the cases of Oliver and Les (no last name, please, his job requires him to be anonymous). When Oliver goes and leans on some apparently crooked business types - with camera crew in tow - it makes you feel like going and checking that you paid the last installment on the car!

Les, perhaps the most patient person you are likely to encounter, sits outside Rita's house for days (perhaps weeks) waiting to catch the lady who has a $400,000 insurance claim in for a bad back. The denouncement, which oddly takes place down the road from our beloved editor's previous headquarters in Bondi, is very funny.

***Gumshoe* is a documentary made for true crime buffs.**

(Contributed by Phil Edwards)

MEAN STREETS READING LIST

Recent Favourites...and books we'd like to find time to read!

1. *White Jazz* - James Ellroy
2. *Whipping Boy* - Gabrielle Lord
3. *No Way Back* - John Carroll
4. *A Stained White Radiance* - James Lee Burke
5. *Dino* - Nick Tosches (THE biography of Dean Martin!!!)
6. *All I Have Is Blue* - James Colbert
7. *Clockers* - Richard Price
8. *Set Up* - Peter Corris
9. *Black Echo* - Michael Connelly
10. *Hardboiled* - Edited by Coupe/Ogden (hey, it's our mag!!)

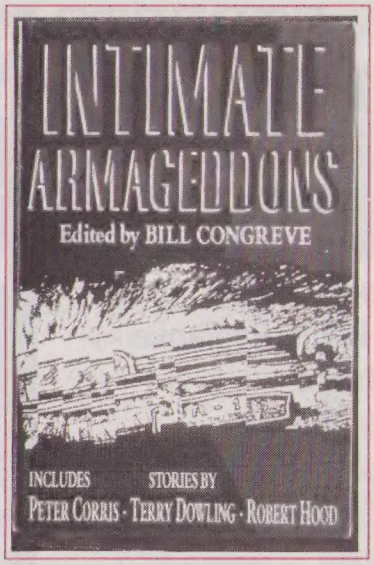
ON THE CASE

PAPERBACK PULP AND COMIC COLLECTOR

Mean Streets is happy to be able to supply Australian readers with this excellent English magazine published by Zardoz Books and edited by Maurice Flanagan.(See ad in this issue). We currently have stocks of issues 4 and 5 and can get earlier issues if requested. Price, including postage, is $7.50 per copy.

SAVE ON CRIME

***Mean Streets* has organised a special readers offer with Allen & Unwin for three new Australian crime fiction titles. Marele Day's third Claudia Valentine novel, *The Last Tango Of Dolores Delgado*, retails for $12.95. Order it from *Mean Streets* and it's just $10. Stephen Knight's third Summer Christmas collection is called *A Corpse At The Opera House* and includes new srories from the likes of Peter Corris, Garry Disher, Robert Wallace, Marele Day and Archie Well. Normally $16.95, it's a knock down $14 from *Mean Streets*. Finally, there's our very own *Hardboiled* which is also $16.95, but for you dear readers let's call it an even $14. We'll even sign it if you ask us!! What's more all prices include postage. So there.**



CAPE FEAR COMPETITION

Now this is a great competition! *Mean Streets* has three copies of the *Cape Fear* video directed by Martin Scorsese and staring Robert De Niro, Jessica Lange and Nick Nolte. It's released by Universal (and distributed by CIC Video) and is an astonishing psychological thriller. Each of the winners will also receive a *Cape Fear* poster plus a copy of the *Cape Fear* book published by Penguin Books. This is a rather classy prize, especially given that the video is not available for sale, only as a rental item - so the question's a little harder than usual. *Cape Fear*, as you'll see in Phil Edwards' feature in this issue, is based on John D. MacDonald's book *The Executioners*. To be in the running we need you to tell us the name of MacDonald's famous series character - and name five JDM novels that this character doesn't feature in. We'll draw the winners from all the correct entries received by November 16.

INTIMATE ARMAGGEDONS

Peter Corris writing horror fiction??? Yep, Peter's contributed a story, Bit Parts, to *Intimate Armageddons*, a new anthology of modern Australian horror stories. The book, edited by *Mean Streets* contributor Bill Congreve, is published by Five Island's Press (see ad this issue) and also includes stories from another MS writer Robert Hood, along with Terry Dowling, Sean Williams, Rosaleen Love, Steve Proposch and others. We'll have a review next issue - but don't wait till then. Just buy it, okay!

WANTED

Garry Disher is looking for three Richard Stark books (in any condition): *Plunder Squad*, *The Dame*, and *The Blackbird*. Contact Garry at 11 Turners Road, Merricks North, VIC 3926.

MEAN STREETS SELLS OUT!!!

If you don't already have a complete collection of *Mean Streets* well, sorry but issue 5 is completely sold out. We're hanging onto a dozen copies for old time's sake (and the great grandchildren) but that's it. Finito. So if you want any other back copies order now. They're $5 each. Don't get caught without a complete collection.

DATABASED MEAN STREETS

The contents of Mean Streets can now be accessed on ILANET, AARNet and via subscription to AUSTLIT, The Australian Literary Database. For more information contact Database Supervisor, University College Library, Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra, ACT, 2600, Australia. Phone (06) 2688174 or FAX (06) 2472324.

COLLECTABLE CRIME

Whilst almost all of Jim Thompson's novels are again available in paperback re-issues, the Jimbo boom prompted a number of hardbacks that, in their original form, are pretty damn scarce. Fireworks - The Lost Writings of Jim Thompson (edited and introduced by Robert Polito and subsequent JT biographer Michael McCauley) was first published by Donald Fine in 1988. It's almost 400 pages of Thompson's lesser known writing from the 1920s through the 70s and is worth the price of admission simply for An Alcoholic Looks At Himself, a piece every bit as harrowing as Charles Jackson's novel The Lost Weekend. Beware of the paperback edition of this collection which omits a lot of material in the hardback. A first edition hardback (there was only one printing to my knowledge) is likely to set you back more than $60 - if you can find a copy!

THE JFK ASSASSINATION INFORMATION CENTRE

Steve Gerlach has announced the opening of The JFK Assassination Information Centre in Melbourne (105 Yarra Road, North Croydon, Vic 3136 or Phone (03) 723 1152). Steve has studied the assassination for the last twelve years and is in contact with assassination researchers and bookshops in the US, as well as the Dallas Assassination Centre. Due to the lack of material and coverage on the subject in Australia, Steve has founded the centre for all those interested in learning more about the life, times and assassination of both JFK and RFK. A conference has been tentatively arranged for Sunday, November 22 - the 29th anniversary of the assassination. Interested? Get in touch.

HARDBOILED

TOUGH, EXPLICIT, UNCOMPROMISING CRIME FICTION

Crime. Violence - random and premeditated. Racism, fear and dark mystery - all are faced head on by the cream of American crime writers in this gripping anthology edited by Stuart Coupe and Julie Ogden, the publishers of Australia's crime, mystery and detective magazine, Mean Streets. Hardboiled is criminally good reading - but not for the fainthearted. Welcome to the real world.

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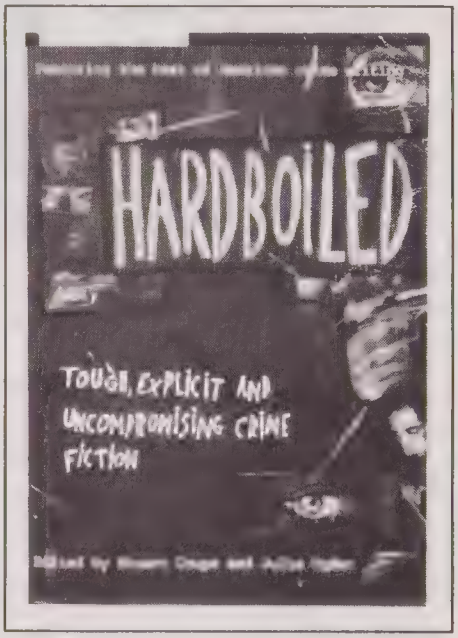

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PI NEWS

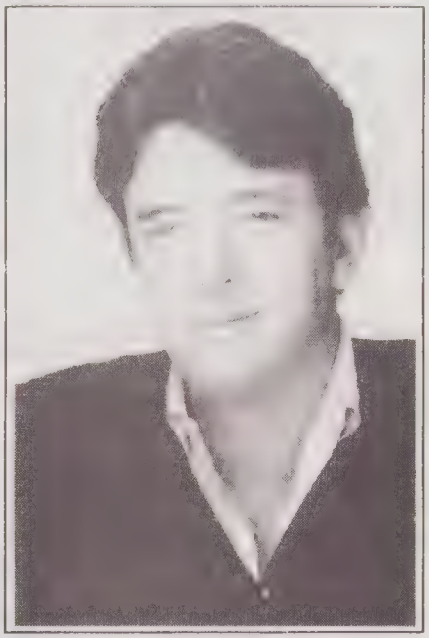
Regular Mean Streets contributor, Graeme Flanagan, a member of the Private Eye Writers of America (PWA) and publisher of PI News, looks at some of the happenings in the world of fictional private investigators.

Nominees for the 1992 Shamus Awards, sponsored by the Private Eye Writers of America (PWA), were announced at the Midwest Mystery Convention held in Omaha, Nebraska in May. Nominations for Best Novel were Lawrence Block's *A Dance at the Slaughterhouse* (Morrow), Max Allan Collins' *Stolen Away* (Bantam), Marcia Muller's *Where Echoes Live* (Mysterious Press), Benjamin Schutz's *A Fistful of Empty* (Viking) and Jonathan Valin's *Second Chance* (Bantam).

Daniel Hearn's *Black Light* (Dell), Kay Hooper's *House of Cards* (Avon), Rob Kantner's *The Thousand Yard Stare* (Bantam) and Paul Kemprecos' *Cool Blue Tomb* (Bantam) were nominated for Best Paperback Original, while Neil Albert's *The January Corpse* (Walker), Bill Crider's *Dead on the Island* (Walker), Stan Cuttler's *Best Performance by a Patsy* (Dutton), Thomas D. Davis' *Suffer Little Children* (Walker) and Don Winslow's *Cool Breeze on the Underground* (St. Martin's) were nominated for Best First Private Eye Novel.

Nominated in the Best Short Story category were Max Allan Collins' "Dying in the Post War World" (from the *Foul Play* collection of the same name), Loren Estleman's "The Man Who Loved Noir" (from *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*), Sue Grafton's "Full Circle" (from the Sara Paretsky-edited anthology *A Woman's Eye*, published by Delacorte), Faye Kellerman's "Discard" (also from *A Woman's Eye*) and Nancy Pickard's "Dust Devil" (from *The Armchair Detective*). Winners of the Shamus Awards will be announced at the Bouchercon mystery convention to be held in Toronto from October 8 to 11.

Benjamin Schutz, author of the highly regarded Leo Haggerty novels, is currently in search of a publisher for *Mexico is Forever*, the sixth book in the series. Earlier novels in the series were *Embrace the Wolf* (1985), which was nominated for a Shamus for Best First PI Novel, *All the Old Bargains* (1985), *A Tax in Blood* (1987), which won the Shamus for Best PI Novel, *The Things We Do for Love* (1989) and *A Fistful of Empty* (1991), which was nominated for this year's Shamus as Best PI Novel.



Dick Lochte

There was a Leo Haggerty short story, "Mary, Mary, Shut the Door" in the PWA/Sisters in Crime anthology *Deadly Allies*, published earlier this year, while a second is in the works for next year's anthology.

Mr Schutz, a clinical and forensic psychologist by profession, told me recently that he has "tried to make (his) character, Leo Haggerty, a realistic investigator, by drawing on (his) own experiences; a 'regular' guy, not a super-hero in any fashion; someone affected by the work he does, changed by it and not always for the better; someone butting up against his own limits and the limits of his ability to help anyone else. As he struggles to balance his own personal quest for identity with respect for others, he may be a model for some of the people he meets who have abandoned their own dreams and goals. He is committed to the struggle to ask the right questions not the foreclosure of 'right' answers."

Another 1992 Shamus nominee is Paul Kemprecos, author of three novels featuring Greek-American PI, Aristotle "Soc" Socarides. Socarides, a diver by profession, lives in a boathouse on Cape Cod in Massachusetts, also the home of Phoebe Atwood Taylor's Asey Mayo. Mr Kemprecos says that he tries to use plenty of humour in his books, and to give readers a sense of Cape Cod, its lonely beaches, its moors, its fog, its beauty, and at times, its tackiness. The first book in the series, Cool *Blue Tomb* (Bantam, 1991), involves the search for a treasure ship off Cape Cod and was nominated for a Shamus award for best paperback original. *Neptune's Eye* (Bantam, 1991), the second book, is set around the scientific community of Woods Hole and involved the search for a missing woman and an underwater robot with strategic value in antisub warfare. In July Doubleday published the third book in the series, *Death in Deep Water*, in a hardcover edition. In this "Soc" is asked to go undercover at a marine theme park to prove the innocence of a killer whale who is thought to have murdered his trainer. A fourth "Soc" Socarides novel is in the hands of a publisher, and Mr Kemprecos is working with his agent on proposals for further books, which he says he will keep writing as long as he can think of

ways to keep Soc underwater.

July also saw the publication in the US by Simon & Schuster of *Blue Bayou* by Dick Lochte. Lochte is the author of *Sleeping Dog* and *Laughing Dog*, two highly amusing and entertaining novels featuring PI Leo Bloodworth and his teenage assistant/thorn-in-the-side Serendipity Dahlquist. *Blue Bayou*, however, features New Orleans private detective Terry Manion, who was introduced in Laughing Dog. Author Lochte had this to say about Terry Manion: "*Laughing Dog* was based on an unfinished work I began quite a while ago with a New Orleans detective as its hero. In reworking it for Leo Bloodworth and Serendipity Dahlquist, I decided to keep the Southern sleuth but sidetrack him while Leo and Serendipity go about the business of finding the killer(s). I guess Manion deserves his own book now. *Blue Bayou* starts with him in a rehabilitation centre, getting rid of the toxic drugs that nearly killed him in *Laughing Dog*."

Lochte had started work on a third "Dog" book when his editor at Simon & Schuster said that she'd prefer another Terry Manion book. As a result, *The Neon Smile* will be published by Simon & Schuster in 1993 and it could be at least three years before Leo and Serendipity get together again. However, a short story in which they appear, "Happy Dog", is scheduled to appear shortly in *The Armchair Detective*.

Janet Dawson's *Kindred Crimes* is selling well in paperback and has been published in Japan and Germany as well as in a Spanish language edition. The third book in her Jeri Howard series was due at the publishers in September, after which Ms Dawson intended to start work immediately on Jeri Howard #4, *Don't Turn Your Back on the Ocean*.

D.C. Brod recently finished her fourth Quint McCauley novel, which will be published by Walker in 1993.

Marcia Muller's thirteenth Sharon McCone mystery, *Pennies on a Dead Woman's Eyes*, was published in July by Mysterious Press.

Rogue Wave, Susan Dunlap's second Kiernan O'Shaughnessy novel was recently published in a paperback edition by Dell.

William Campbell Gault, recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award at Bouchercon in Los Angeles last year, has been writing novels featuring former Los Angeles Rams football player turned private eye, Brock "The Rock" Callahan, since 1955. *Dead Pigeon*, the 13th novel in the series, was published recently in a Carroll & Graf paperback edition. Bill Pronzini, author of the "Nameless" novels, wrote the introduction.

Sarah Shankman

J. Madison Davis, who currently teaches at the University of Oklahoma, is the author of four mystery novels to date. *Red Knight*, recently published by Walker, the second novel to feature Pittsburgh PIs Dub Greenert and Vonna Saucier, follows 1990's acclaimed White Rook.

Michael Cormany, the subject of an article in the last issue of *Mean Streets*, recently had his first novel, *Lost Daughter*, published in Japan. In the meantime, Mr Cormany has severed his ties with Birch Lane Press and is looking for a new publisher for his Dan Kruger books as well as for a more humorous series featuring a young reporter and an old cop during World War 2.

A new private investigator on the scene is Reno, Nevada PI Freddie O'Neal, who appears in Catherine Dain's *Lay it on the Line*, a paperback original published by Jove in September.

Michael Collins, aka Dennis Lynds, John Crowe, etc etc, is the author of 18 books featuring one-armed PI Dan Fortune. The series, which commenced back in 1967 with *Act of Fear*, has seen two more books published during 1992: a novel, *Cassandra in Red*, and *Crime, Punishment and Resurrection*, a collection of short stories.

Robert R. Irvine, whose fifth Moroni Traveler novel was published by St. Martins in June, has finished the sixth in the series, *The Great Reminder*, and has started a new series featuring a network television newsman. The first book in the series is tentatively entitled *Barking Dogs*.

Vintage Books in America are currently in the process of reprinting in paperback editions much of the work by two of the biggest names in the PI genre: Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett. As far as I am aware, Chandler's *The Big Sleep; Farewell, My Lovely; The High Window; The Lady in the Lake; The Long Goodbye* and *Trouble is My Business*, along with Hammett's *The Continental Op; The Maltese Falcon; Red Harvest;* and *The Thin Man* have been published to date.

Sarah Shankman's Samantha Adams is not a private investigator, but rather an investigative reporter based in Atlanta, Georgia. However, this is a series which should appeal both to private eye and general mystery readers, particularly those who like a dose of humour mixed in with their murder and mayhem. Ms Shankman recently told me that *Impersonal Attractions*, first published by St. Martin's Press in 1985, is actually the genesis of Samantha Adams. In this book she is called Samantha Storey, but is basically the same character who appeared in *First Kill All the Lawyers* (Pocket Books) in 1988. Subsequent books in the series were *Then Hang All the Liars* (1989), *Now Let's Talk of Graves* (1990), *She Walks in Beauty* (1991) and the soon-to be-published *The King is Dead*. The first two books in the series were originally published under the pen-name Alice Storey.

Ms Shankman is currently working on a sixth novel in the Sam Adams series, which she says are not really mysteries or whodunnits, but rather Southern comedies of manners cum crime, particularly from the third book onwards. Ms Shankman also contributed stories to *Sisters in Crime 3* ("Say You're Sorry") and *Sisters in Crime 4* ("Wish You Were Here"). ■

PATRICIA D. CORNWELL

American crime writer Patricia Cornwell has observed more than 200 autopsies whilst researching her character chief medical examiner Dr Kay Scarpetta. Stuart Coupe phoned Cornwell (who registers at hotels under an alias) in the States just prior to her departure for a promotional visit to this country and encountered an author who's outspoken on many subjects.

Stuart Coupe: Is it a sign of fame that you don't register at hotels under your real name?

Patricia Cornwell: I don't use my real name because I've had people try and find me in the past and that's very dangerous.

SC: So you've had harassment in the past?

PC: I've had attempts at it. My publicity people have been very good at screening people but I believe the best defense is prevention. I'm pretty street wise because of the things I know. The FBI told me a long time ago that I should stop using my real name in hotels so I just don't do it anymore. It helps to have those kinds of friends (laughs). They look after me.

SC: I gather you're now writing full time and have stopped working for the Medical Examiners Office?

PC: I'm a consultant for them which is really more of an honourary title. It means that they still allow me to have a key to the place and I still go see them and have access. I also give talks for investigative agencies and even the FBI. They invite me to their conventions and I teach classes on media relations and things like that. But yes it is full time. I have a full-time person who works for me now and several other people I pay fees to because I just can't keep up with it. I have found myself the accidental president of a company - a corporation that I never intended to have. Writing becomes a business when you begin to do this well and I never wanted to be a businesswoman, I wanted to be a writer (laughs).

SC: Are you surprised by the success and the fact that it's come relatively quickly?

PC: It is a little mind boggling how quickly all of this has happened. At the same time there's a part of me that isn't surprised either because I know I bring something...I was going to say that I bring something to the table but in the light of my work that really is a bad pun. But I have an offering for people that is a little different. The publicity helps a great deal and I'm a good candidate for it because I can talk about things other than metaphors. I can talk about violence and law enforcement and issues that are very hot in modern society. Issues I have very strong opinions about because I'm very well educated in those areas. So I'm not surprised in some ways because there are a lot of components that figure in

my success - gifts that you're born with. You can't learn them and you can't work hard enough to make some things happen. You have to have talent which is something that's hereditary. It's genetic. So I've been very, very fortunate.

SC: You're also rather young to be writing crime fiction. There seems very few writers are under 40.

PC: That does seem to be traditional just about everywhere in crime fiction. You usually associate crime novels with women who look like the head mistress at a girls school and at the nice, comfortable age of about 50 or 55. The face you trust and the kind of person you want to have tea with. I definitely do not fit into that category. In fact most people would probably run in fear (laughs). They tend to promote me over here as this gun slinger who hangs out with dead bodies. It's a little bit extreme, but it's a lot of fun though.

SC: When you wrote *Postmortem* were you already thinking of Scarpetta as a series character.

PC: I knew when I had finished *Postmortem* that it was going to be a series because I was wedded to Scarpetta after that book. She'd been a minor character in three earlier books that never got published, so she'd been around for awhile. She just wouldn't go away, and she got stronger and stronger with each book. What it amounts to is a friendly takeover. This woman has completely taken over my life and I can't imagine writing a crime novel without her in it at this stage because in a way these stories are about her. They're her stories. They're not novels where I've simply decided to stick Dr Scarpetta in. I feel as if I am telling stories about cases that she has worked on. It's almost as if I'm reporting on what this lady is doing, and perhaps that's why there is such a strong non-fiction element in my work. I think I'm still a reporter at heart.

SC: Were the first three unpublished books crime orientated?

PC: Yes they were. I'd call them poor man P.D. James. The murder in the lovely river mansion involving archeology digs. Very descriptive and poetic and with the walking

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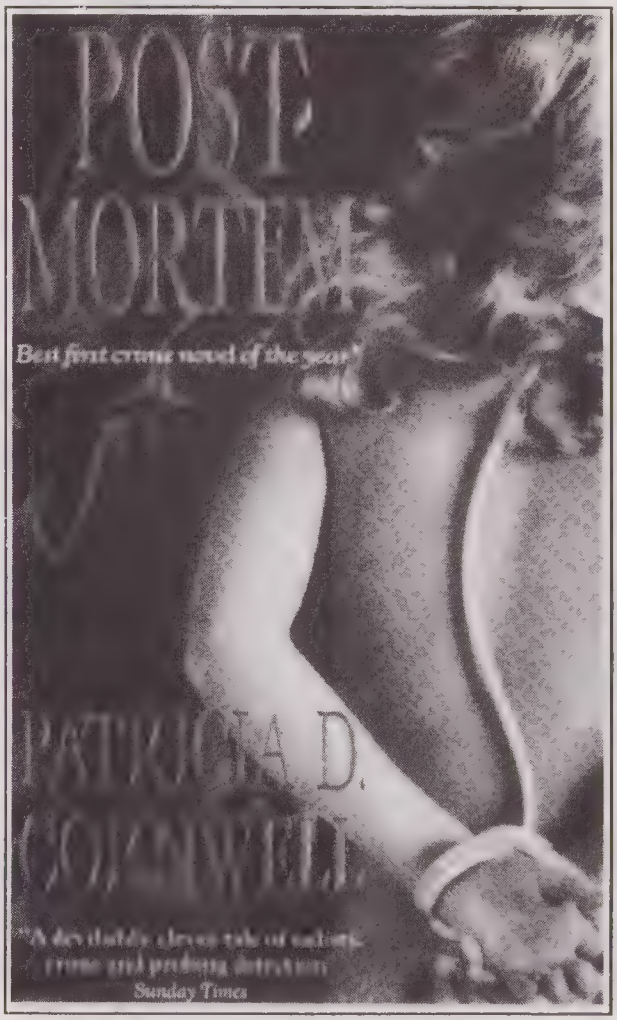
wounded male detective who drives a BMW and carries a secret that nobody knows (laughs). And well, well golly gee, they just didn't go anywhere. Meanwhile here's Scarpetta, this feisty woman in the morgue and she was trying to tell me something and after three books and three strike outs she emerges in *Postmortem* as in charge. The poor man's Adam Dalgleish is nowhere to be found. Instead he's replaced by the beer swilling Marino and suddenly it all works. I guess it's because I'm actually telling the truth this time.

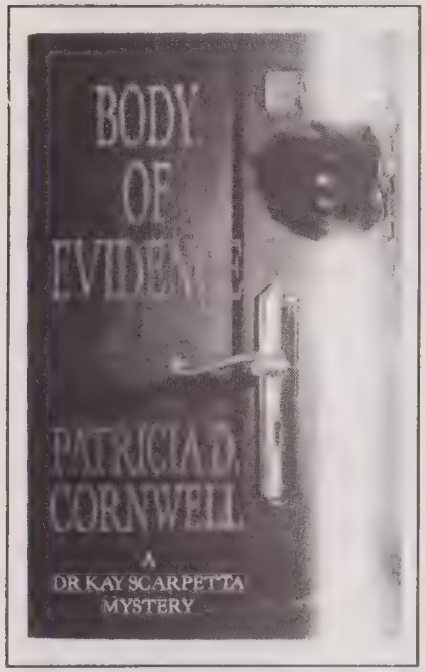


SC: I'm curious about the biography you wrote of Ruth Graham, the wife of American evangelist Billy Graham. What was so fascinating about her? I must admit I know nothing about her.

PC: Nobody did. I wrote about Ruth because when I was seven my parents broke up and my mother moved my two brothers and me to North Carolina and as it turns out we ended up living two miles from the Graham's house in this very small town. Ruth was one of my neighbours and I got to know her. Over the years I observed her behind the scenes. I used to hear all the Ruth Graham anecdotes about the funny things and kind things she did in the neighbourhood and it was my good fortune that when I was a teenager we struck up a friendship. She was very close to me and very good to me when I was going to college. She was kinda like a surrogate mother and was quite an influence on me - not so much in a religious way but just in terms of her kindness and making me feel like I was a worthwhile person because my self esteem was not too great at that stage of my life. Like most people I was a troubled teenager and I guess I thought if this lady, who's married to the most famous man in the world, which he was back then, thinks I'm special then I must be. And actually that's true. Why would she waste her time on me? She was the one who encouraged me to write. I'd let her read my poetry and short stories and she kept telling me how talented I was.

SC: So do you expect it'll be reissued with a cover line saying 'by the author of *Body Of Evidence*'?

PC: I think there's a possibility. People in this country are so curious about this thing I wrote



when I was in my twenties. It is a rather strange situation. I mean people ask Ruth Graham how can it be that this woman's your biographer and she just says 'well, I drove her to homicide'.

SC: Did the interest in writing crime fiction grow out of the police reporting or had you been a reader of crime fiction?

PC: No. I've never been a reader of crime fiction. I still don't read it. I've never read any mysteries. I'd never even read one single Agatha Christie when I started doing this. I was simply interested in crime and violence because of my police reporting. I was fascinated in a non-fiction way in what goes on outside my door and I began doing research and became absolutely engrossed in the nuts and bolts of how all this works. I'm a very curious, analytical person and very, very tenacious. When I began to discover what goes on behind the scenes in the laboratories, the morgue, the detective squad rooms and the police department I wanted to be there and absorb all of it. I'm like a pack man - I devour my way through the universe because I want to know it all.

SC: There's been an increasing debate over recent years about violence in crime fiction, particularly in America, and suggestions that often it's salacious, pornographic, and a celebration.

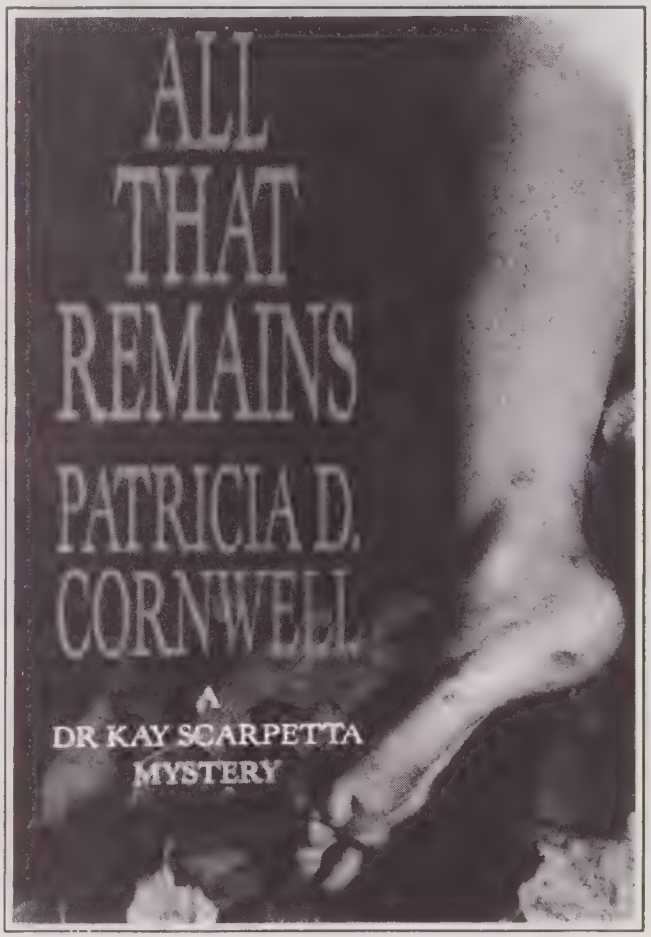
PC: That's very true. I find some of the crime fiction, particularly in this country, absolutely offensive. I think it's disturbing because it links sex and violence when the two should not be linked at all. You can not watch nudity and normal sexual activity on public television in the United States but you can watch a woman being strangled and thrown out a window after she's had an attempted rape as long as you don't show her nude. That's ridiculous. There are now some women writers who are writing the same sort of stuff - almost pornographic scenes that involve terrible violence so you titilate your audience by showing somebody raped and then murdered. I don't ever show you that. I have a very humane doctor who reconstructs these terrible things. But what some people want to do is make it sexy and that's the way they lure the reader so you're feeding right into the sickness. In a way, in a literary way, you are committing the same crime your criminal did. And that is something that I don't intend to do and I'm very oppossed to. I don't believe in censorship but I believe that individuals can choose whether this is something they don't want to read and don't want their children to read. It will not continue to be published if people are not entertained by it. I am not excited by watching somebody suffer. I've seen too many dead bodies and I'm too sensitive to death to find it entertaining.

SC: Are there any specific writers that you think really push that sex and violence equation too far?

PC: Well sure. I think the guy who wrote *American Psycho*, Brett Easten Ellis - that's obviously pushing it too far. I even think that books like David Lindsey's *Mercy* push it too far. There's just a whole slew of these things. There's many, many that I think push it too far.

SC: It seems as though this equation is becoming increasingly common.

PC: It's been around since the beginning of time, ever since cavemen dragged women off by their hair. But I think the exploitation of it in the arts, I would dare say without being an historian or critic, is proliferated in the United States. We have a lot of special problems in the US that lend to this kind of violence. In addition to that we have a very fragmented society with people who grow up and don't bond with anybody. There's nobody there for them so they think nothing of picking up strangers and doing bad things to them. The mobility in our society makes it easy for people to do bad things and then move on to another state. The drug problem has added to all this. We pay a high price for our freedom and our mobility here. All I can say is we certainly have a problem in this country. The FBI claims that 75% of the world's serial killers reside in the continental US - that's quite frightening.



SC: There's also some positive things about contemporary American crime fiction, like the emphasis on writing about child abuse.

PC: That's very true. As a matter of fact I intend to deal with that subject somewhat in my fifth book, the one that I'll be starting this Fall. Not child abuse so much as paedophilia which is, of course, child

child abuse but a different kind. I'm talking about the kind where strangers do things to children. In other words I address the same very terrible subjects that other crime writers address, including ones that I've said I find offensive, but the difference is that I am showing all of this from the point of view of a very humane, civilised, enlightened human being who has devoted her life to fighting this. And that simply is a reflection of reality. What I'm fascinated by is that there are decent human beings like Kay Scarpetta who get up every morning and spend every working hour dealing with these atrocities and my focus is what it feels like to be them? What do they learn from it? What insights do they get? How do they fight this? How do they make a difference? So I explore all of that instead of crawling into the dark recess of the psychopathic mind and spending all my time with a Hannibal Lector. I don't care to do that. I would probably go stark raving mad.

SC: Do you remember the first autopsy you watched?

PC: Yes I do. I do indeed. I remember when I first walked into the morgue. It was an elderly woman and she caught me by surprise because I rounded a corner and almost bumped into her. For just an instant I went weak in the knees because I'd never really been around dead people before. But I very quickly got clinical and followed the lead of the doctors in there and I watched the entire procedure and I had no trouble with it. I just tried to turn myself into the people I was with and to have their perspective on it instead of having emotional responses to it. I looked at it as a medical procedure. Very clinically. Very scientifically. I also engaged my curiosity, ie, what are these people doing, why did they do this, what does all this mean? As it turns out she was a natural death so it was a gentle way to enter that theatre because this woman had died peacefully in her own home. I think it was a heart attack or something like that.

But very quickly I began seeing the cases that one would find disturbing. People who did not die peacefully, and whose lives were short circuited through some random accident or some act of violence. And many of those images will haunt me forever. It was not the autopsy that would get to me, it was when they first came in. The most horrific aspect of my experiences in the morgue were when the bodies first came in. You always knew when the case was really bad because a hush would fall over the place and there was a tension, an eeriness in the air. The only thing I can compare it to is the way the air feels sometimes when a very bad storm front is moving in and the pressure seems to change. You would just feel this sense of tension and foreboding. The rescue squad would bring in the body on a stretcher, usually all covered up with a clean sheet and then there was the unveiling, so to speak, and you would see the carnage left of some unspeakable act of violence, usually of sexual violence. Those cases and what happens to children are so disturbing because there's so much sadism involved. I mean it's terrible to shoot somebody. No death is good by any means but the sadistic ones, where somebody physically had contact with that individual and tied them up and tortured them, those images are just unspeakable. You look at these people and you can't believe that somebody would do this to another person.

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SC: So you've got no yearning to go back into the morgue?

PC: Do I care to see anymore cases like that? Well I'm sure I will. I have dedicated myself to writing these books and as long as I walk around in Scarpetta's shoes I cannot avoid the reality. I don't need to be down there 40 hours a week but I'll probably go several times a year.

SC: You mentioned a fifth book. Does that mean there's a fourth completed?

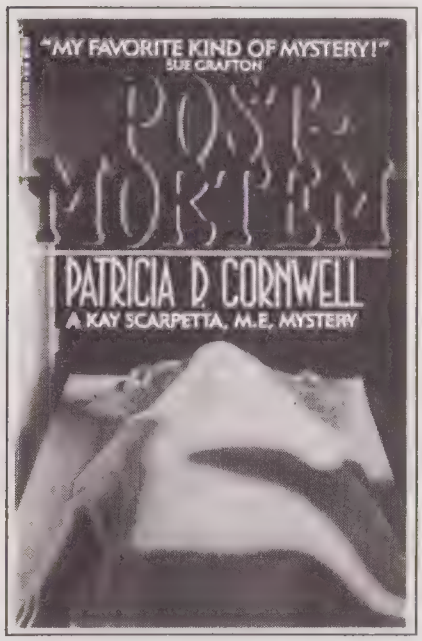
PC: There is. It's called *Cruel And Unusual* as in cruel and unusual punishment. It's done and I assume will be out within a year.

SC: I'd imagine you're inundated with film offers?

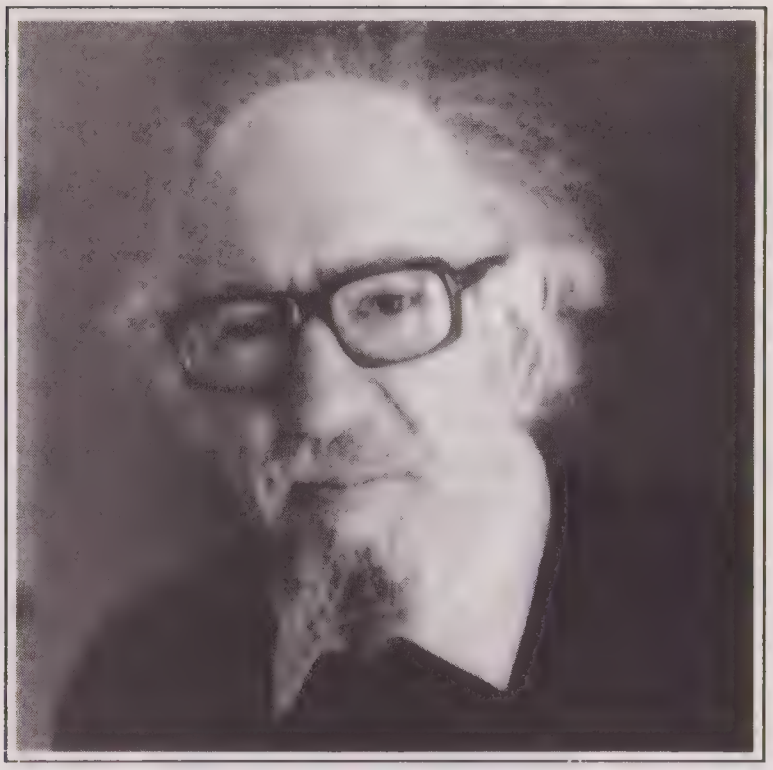
PC: Oh indeed I am. In fact I go to LA on Saturday to discuss them. The top female stars in Hollywood are interested in Scarpetta at the moment. The very top. And Columbia Pictures is very interested. I will be talking with a lot of these people while I'm there, but we're being very stingy and very reticent about any kind of deal because Scarpetta's going to be huge. And they're really buying her. I'd rather have nothing at all than something that does't feel just right.

SC: Do you have an idea of the ideal person to play Scarpetta?

PC: You know I really don't know. I know that Sigourney Weaver is interested and of course she's a very intelligent, strong actress and she might be a good possibility, but I don't know. It's kind of like the search for Scarlet. We might just have to find somebody brand new. It's not going to be easy to find the right Scarpetta (laughs). It's got to be somebody very, very intelligent (laughs). ■



The American version of Postmortem's cover



JULIAN SYMONS

SCREAMS BLOODY MURDER

Julian Symons has been described by the *Sunday Times* as "Incontestably the doyen of British crime writers." As well as being a prolific novelist Symons, who turned 80 a few months ago, is a provocative critic. In this interview with Stuart Coupe he discusses the new edition of his controversial study of crime fiction - *Bloody Murder*.

Stuart Coupe: Can you tell me about any early Australian crime novels you might have read?

Julian Symons: There was a whole group of writers in the forties and fifties that I read. Just dredging back in the memory there was S.H. Courtier and a woman...Margot Neville perhaps. And of course Arthur Upfield although I must say I never much liked him. I seem to remember that one or two of Courtier's books were quite good. I'm sure that there's nothing very significant or very exciting in the way of Australian crime writing that's been published here in the last few years.

SC: What was it about Upfield that you didn't like?

JS: I feel about Upfield the same way I do about Tony Hillerman. Bony's achievements in tracing things as being an aboriginal or half aboriginal don't have very much appeal to an English audience, nor does Hillerman's Navajo detective. This is being extremely insular you might say, but although Hillerman's books are highly esteemed here, they've never been at all popular. I did find Arthur Upfield fairly dull as well. I thought he wasn't at all an exciting writer.

SC: I was interested in your thoughts on a comment that someone made to me once - that there comes a point in reviewing crime fiction where you start

to think that every crime novel has been written by the same person. I wonder if you ever felt that way?

JS: I wouldn't go along with that at all. There's a certain type of crime story which you might say seems to have been written by the same person, but the very best one's are obviously all written by quite different people. That's to say that they've got a strong standpoint of individual writing and individual feeling. The run of the mill ones, not to call them anything worse, might well have all been written by the same person if you're stretching a point.

SC: The third edition of *Bloody Murder* has the same basic text with an extensive update at the end. Was there a reason for not tampering with the basic text?

JS: I've left the earlier book because it seemed wrong to keep on changing and chopping about and adding little tiny bits, but I've added the long postscript which my English publisher calls incendiary. In Australia the most incendiary aspect of it might be that I don't mention Australian crime writers, but that's simply because I haven't read them.

SC: I must say that much of *Mean Streets* is concerned with the work of contemporary American crime writers..

JS: I thought that might be so.

SC: So I was intrigued by your criticism of many of those writers. You obviously have little affection for America crime writing of the last decade.

JS: No, that's wrong. I'm sorry if I've given that impression. I'll tell you a very good tough American crime writer whom I've just read. He's just mentioned in this edition of *Bloody Murder* and I've just read two more of his books and I think they're extremely good. That's a man called Tom Kakonis.

SC: Yes I've read *Michigan Role*.

JS: I thought that book was very good. I've just read *Double Down* and that also brings in Waverly who was the character in *Michigan Role*, and that to me seems much better, much more exciting than Elmore Leonard at present - as distinct from Elmore Leonard in the past. Kakonis has another book called *Criss Cross*, that was the second one.

SC: What is it you like about Kakonis, and Petievich who you're reasonably complimentary about?

JS: The Kakonis books are well written and sharply written. One could say that about a lot of American writers but I wouldn't say it about a lot of the better known Americans. Kakonis doesn't pander to the sado masochism that is present in a lot of American crime stories. I'm not accusing the writers of loving it, but I think they know there's an audience that loves it. Many of these books are both overtly violent and very badly written. Another thing I dislike, which is a minor thing, is that a lot of them are absolutely sub, sub Hemingways. Kakonis is not. He has an individual style.

SC: What is the attraction of those books

JS: I think it's an attraction we all feel now days...by all I don't mean that I necessarily do...but there is a general feeling towards violence. One's only got to look at the change in TV, which I imagine applies to Australia as well as to other countries, to see how much more overt the violence is, and how much more violent it is. It's no longer symbolic. There has really got to be blood about. A couple of nights ago I saw a film called *Goodfellas* which was directed by Scorsese...it's actually quite good but absolutely full

of overt violence of a kind that I feel goes over-the-top. By the end of the film your senses are dulled. One more face battered in, one more person kicked and kicked and kicked. In the end one just doesn't bother about it. It has almost no effect. That scares me, I'm afraid of a change in societies attitudes. The writers that deal in that sort of material aren't very popular here but what popularity they have is because they are in tune with that change in attitude.

SC: So you feel that excessive violence in crime fiction can reduce the impact on the reader and therefore mean that the author has not had the effect that they desire?

JS: Yes. One can see that in actual life very clearly by the fact, for example, on TV news when we saw the first scene of a prisoner being calmly shot or having his head chopped off we were horrified. But now we've seen things like that so often we just take it for granted. The same kind of thing applies to violence in fiction. It's also artistically bad. You can produce much more horrific effects, if that's what you're seeking to achieve, by being more restrained. It's their lack of restraint that I don't like. It's very bad writing. But please don't write me off as being somebody who's totally opposed to recent American writing. That simply isn't so. I admire Loren D Estleman a lot. I've enjoyed Jerome Charyne. They're very way out books.

SC: You have some semi-favourable words for the first John Camp novel - but have you read the novels he's written as John Sandford which are rather bloodthirsty affairs?

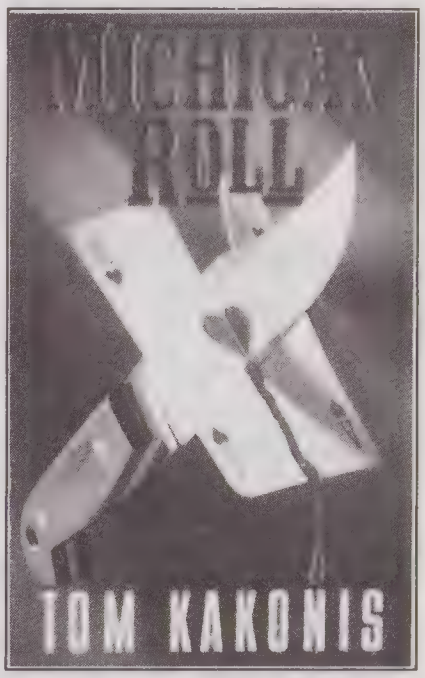
JS: No I haven't. I only heard about those afterwards. I had no idea that John Camp had another name.

SC: Speaking of people with other names, Derek Raymond (real name Robin Cook) is another writer who deals with extreme violence. Traditionally the English and European crime novel is a little less overtly violent - but Raymond is a definite exception, possibly blacker and nastier than the American writers.

JS: Certainly one of the nastiest books I've read is *I Was Dora Suarez*.

SC: I was intrigued that you mentioned Ishmael Reed who's a rather peripheral figure in crime writing.

JS: He is I suppose. But I found the books very interesting. It's hard to know of course where one should place the border of crime writing.



According to Symons, *Michigan Roll* by Tom Kakonis, doesn't pander to the sado masochism that is present in a lot of American crime stories.

SC: What is it about Estleman that causes you to single him out over the other private eye writers. You suggest that he's the best of the post Chandler/Hammett/Macdonald school of writing.

JS: I certainly feel that. He's much more original and much more his own man than most of the others. So many of them wouldn't be writing if Chandler/Hammett and Macdonald hadn't existed whereas I do feel that there's something original about Loren Estleman.

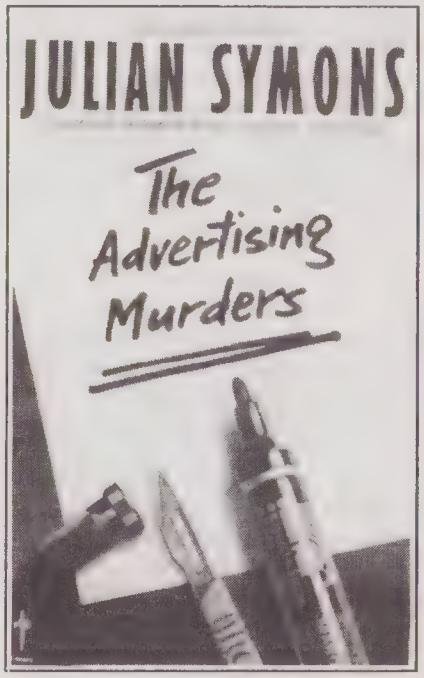
SC: Do you tire of the stereotyped world weary, bourbon soaked, trench coated private eye. It seems that most of the PI genre coming from America these days are just repeating a formula.

JS: Well that's right. Most of those, as your friend says, might have been written by the same person - although they do have different locales.

SC: Do you think there are any writers these days who are really extending the notion of the detective or mystery novel or is it just a genre destined to repeat itself within a pre-existing framework?

JS: The Barbara Vine books, certainly the first two and perhaps one or two of the others, they push out the notion of what the crime story or crime novel is or can be. I think there are a number of writers who do that. I've been trying to do it myself (laughs). The last book I wrote, called *Death's Darkest Face*, has a twist - I sit in my armchair and solve the mystery. The mystery moves back and forwards in time, but in time it's solved by me. In other books I've tried to push out the borders by having a solution in which the reader is left to form his own conclusions. There are a whole lot of writers trying to extend it. It's been extended in the sense that you can now have any kind of detective - lesbian detectives, homosexual detectives and so on. All this inevitably pushes out the boundaries of the crime story. I feel some of the writers I don't like, such as Vachss and Ellroy, are pushing away at the borders of the crime story, especially if you look at it in terms of what the borders were in 1945 when the war ended, it really is a very much changed article.

SC: In *Bloody Murder* you're reason-



ably dismissive of Jim Thompson who's obviously going through a huge wave of popularity at present. You suggest that he would probably have been a better film writer than novelist.

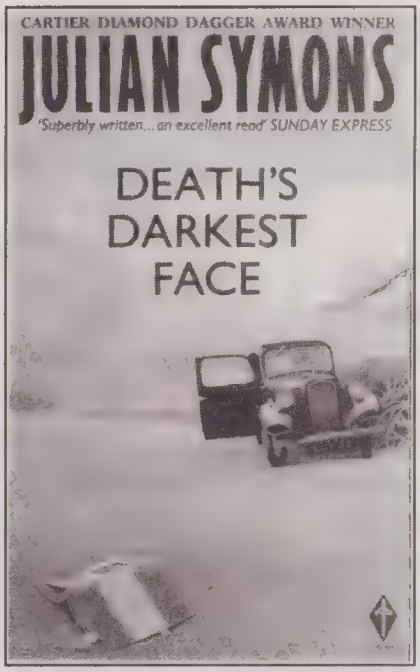
JS: I think so, yes. In fact this applies to a lot of books of that sort. A lot of the tough American books, past and present, are conceivable more in filmic terms than they are in terms of words on a page. I also find it difficult distinguishing Thompson from say David Goodis or a number of others.

SC: You were, however, quite complimentary about the first couple of Jonathan Latimer books.

JS: Yes, but in a way they were in the Hammett mould, not as good as Hammett, but they've got some very sharp wisecracks in them.

SC: How would you place your own writing in the scheme of things?

JS: I would leave someone else to do that. My only thought about my own writing is that I would like some of my books to be considered as novels. They're crime stories, of course, but they aim to be novels. I would regard writers such as P.D. James, Patricia


CARTIER DIAMOND DAGGER AWARD WINNER
JULIAN SYMONS
'Superbly written... an excellent read' SUNDAY EXPRESS
DEATH'S DARKEST FACE

Highsmith and Ruth Rendell as three good novelists and I would hope the best of mine would be taken as being novels too.

SC: You mention towards the end of *Bloody Murder* that finally the crime novel is starting to be taken seriously.

JS: This is so. A new book by P.D. James is going to get very respectful attention, the same kind of attention that would be given to someone like Martin Amis. So is a book by Ruth Rendell. There is still of course a fair way to go.

SC: You've written an astonishing number of books. Are there any that you're particularly fond of?

JS: There's about half a dozen that I think are good. One is called The Thirty-First Of February which is an early book published in 1950. The first two of the Man Who books, a book called *The Man Who Killed Himself* and *The Man Whose Dreams Came True*, those I think are good novels as well as a period crime story which is called *The Blackheath Poisonings*. You suffer a lot, or you make life more difficult for yourself, if you do what I've done and refuse to have a detective who goes through a series of books. It seems to me that it limits you if you always have the one character at the centre of the story. They intrude much too much ■.

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CRAWLEY RETURNS IN THE JAPANESE JOB

Crawley liked the Brisbane of the 90s. The new buildings, the feeling that he could walk down whichever side of the pavement he wanted to. He liked the post Fitzgerald changes for the most part too - new, leaner faces in government and the police. But there were worrying signs of the Yakuza moving in and of the rear-guard action by the white shoe brigade. And who were the Diggers? And how did a leading Japanese businessman end up encased in cement with a length of reinforcing rod through his heart?

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STONE COLD SOBER?

For decades the PI drank hard - so hard that often he had trouble telling the difference between the blonde in distress and the Empire State Building. Now gumshoes are cleaning up their act. Is it a reflection of the times and the PI novel keeping pace with contemporary lifestyles? Peter Doyle investigates the presentation of alcohol (and drugs) in the crime novel. Is there no excusin' their boozin'?

He brought in a bottle of Black and White, a siphon and some glasses, and we settled down to drinking. We drank and talked, drank and talked, and each of us pretended to be drunker than he really was - though before long we were both as full as a pair of goats.

. . . Pulling himself dizzily up out of his chair, he wandered into the next room and came staggering back into the room again carrying an elaborate opium layout - all silver and ebony - on a silver tray. He put it on the table and flourished a pipe at me.

"Have a li'l reaer on me, Parker."

I told him I'd stick to the scotch.

"Give y' shot of C 'fy'd rather have it," he invited me.

I declined the cocaine, so he sprawled himself comfortably on the floor beside the table, rolled and cooked a pill, and our party went on, with him smoking his hop and me punishing the liquor...

Dashiell Hammett
***The Golden Horseshoe*, 1924**

I took a large swallow of my coke. God I love that stuff. I guess you could say I'm addicted. Well it's better than being addicted to the other coke. This one rots your teeth but the other one rots your brain.

Jack Early
***A Creative Kind Of Killer*, 1984**

The premises are low-rent and unimpressive, there hasn't been a client through the door in an age, but he's not that fussed. He doesn't like the world much at the best of times. There's a roscoe in the top drawer and in the bottom a bottle of Early Times, or Cutty Shark, or Old Grandad, or Johnny Walker...or mineral water. Like his country cousin, the pulp cowboy, the old hardboiled private eye has stood (and fallen down) as a hammed-up, quasi-caricatured male role model for the best part of a century. But the more the PI stays the same, the more he changes, especially when it comes to drinking. As societal attitudes to drink and drugs have changed - generally to become more down on the former and soft on the latter - the PIs have had to change and it has caused more than a few problems for those good 'ol boys of the dark alley and their creators.

THE OLD GUARD

The hardboiled PI stereotype crystalised around the time of and largely through the efforts of Dashiell Hammett. His Sam Spade stands for most people as the quintessential dick - terse, private and violent. And almost supernaturally knowing. In this last regard Spade is very much like his stable-mates Nick Charles (of *The Thin Man)* and the Op, the operative from the Continental Detective Agency who features in a swag of short stories

and a handful of novels.

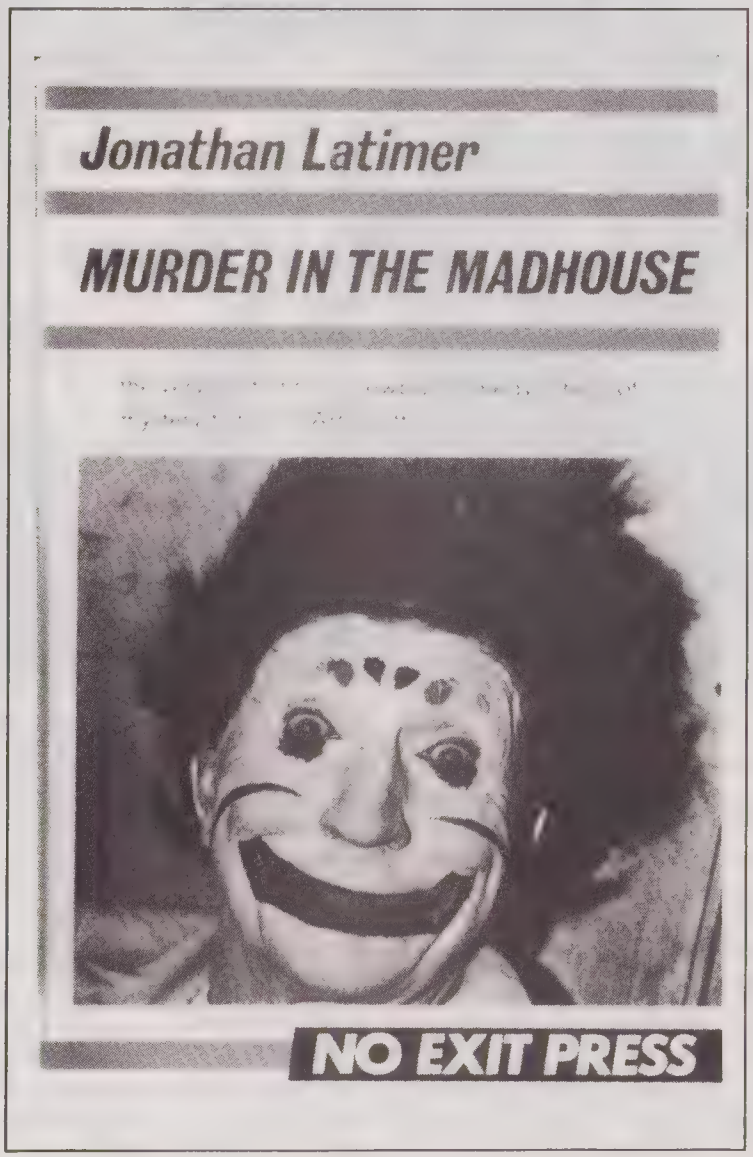
All the Hammett protagonists have a fondness for strong drink. The Op sloshes his way through more than a few yarns, but consummate professional that he is, always manages to come up trumps. Newly-weds Nick and Nora Charles display a zestful, often celebratory style of boozing. They quite happily hit the whisky before breakfast, while still in bed! The Charles' drinking, enthusiastic by any standards, was modelled on Hammett and longtime companion, Lillian Hellman. For Sam Spade and Ned Beaumont (hero of *The Glass Key*) drinking is as much a part of their masculinity as wearing a hat.

It is of no concern why they drink, they just do. Little is given to illuminate their inner processes, psychological or physical. If they give little away, it is not because they know and aren't telling. They don't know. These were characters written in a time when science had deprived human processes of mystique and magic. Science had provided a rudimentary system for knowing, a framework of metaphor within which experience might be understood. Yet 'science' - including psychology - was yet to be a discourse within the reach of everyday people (except for that special breed, the workshed tinkerer, building his crystal set, or inventing a new bottle opener). The neighbourhood doctor, the pharmacist and to a lesser extent the minister of religion possessed the only 'expertise' in this area. But sleuths rarely availed themselves of the services of any of these people, preferring the bottle, the Luckies, the left hook and the roscoe.

The shamus stereotype stabilised fairly quickly. The hardboiled sleuth of the thirties was more often than not a variant of one or more of Hammett's heroes. Almost immediately pulp crime writers such as Robert Leslie Bellem ("Dan Turner") and Jonathan Latimer began producing parodic detective stories in which everything was turned up to eleven, including the boozing.

"... this ability of the fictional detective to pull his socks up and resolve difficult matters with an eleventh hour flourish, may represent a wish-fulfilment fantasy on the part of the writers."

Traditionally investigators, in order to solve the crime, descend into the urban underworlds of petty and grand criminality, public corruption, private squalor, cruelty and failed love, plain weakness, lust, greed, and, always, untruth. The PI solves cases by mixing in, causing as much disruption as he can and then standing back and watching what happens. Matters rapidly get out of hand and the body count goes up (to three, in the classic tale). The investigator will more often than not lose the confidence of his client and everyone else concerned, but at the last moment - surprise, surprise - will regain control of the case and bring it to a conclusion. Fooled you! I was in control all along!



Jonathan Latimer's gumshoe William Crane lurches through five novels, cracking wise and drinking with suicidal abandon. He does his job in virtual blackout state. For Crane the descent and his bender run parallel, as he loses control of both the case and himself. His return to the surface world and relative sobriety is accomplished a little too easily perhaps for the modern reader to believe, but it exemplifies an aspect of the archetype of the drunken hero - his ability to regain control at will. When one considers the battle with the bottle that Hammett, Chandler and any number of detective writers fought, this ability of the fictional detective to pull his socks up and resolve difficult matters with an eleventh hour flourish, may represent a wish-fulfilment fantasy on the part of the writers. And their readers, judging by the ubiquity of the con-

course, the William Crane novels are largely tongue in cheek, and they become more so as the series progresses.

Raymond Chandler in his Philip Marlowe stories added a penchant for cranky, offhand social commentary and at the same time played down the parodic element of the detective stereotype. In all other respects his sleuth is a continuation of the 1920s and thirties PI. The post-war private eyes tended to follow the Chandler tack, the most extreme being perhaps Mickey Spillane's positively brutal Mike Hammer. Chandler's bitterness and quite often genuine social conscience become with Spillane an obsessive and violent misanthropy. For both Marlowe and Hammer drinking is a solitary, sullen and usually joyless pursuit. One would quite happily share a bottle or two with bon vivants of the Op, Crane or Turner's stamp, but you would have to think twice about drinking with Marlowe or Hammer. They would probably not want you to anyway.

Yet another version of the type appears in John D. MacDonald's Travis McGee character, albeit a sun-soaked, laid-back variant. Travis likes a drink as much as the next PI but never for long neglects the spartan self-improvement programs to which he periodically subjects himself. A Travis McGee story typically begins with Trav and his good buddy Meyer midway through a season of sun, women, boats and expensive liquor. Trav is called upon to help an old friend - usually female - in distress. He reluctantly agrees to help but but alas, the good life has made him soft. There follows inevitably a rigourous program of sobriety and physical fitness. (Another wish-fulfilment fantasy along the lines of "I may look like a self-indulgent suburban slob, but behind this paunch there stands a hard-muscled, hawk-eyed killing machine, so back off, Geek!"?)

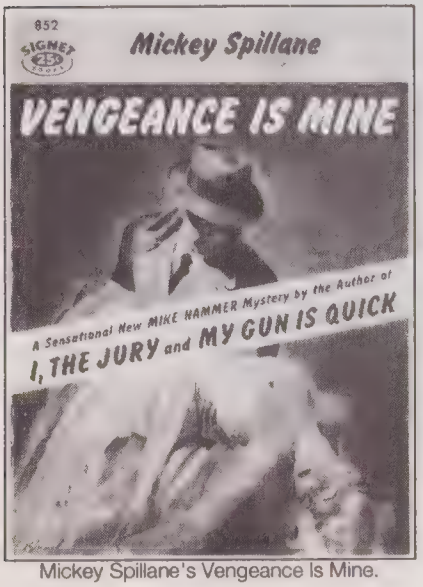
For all these characters, tough guy status is vouchsafed in no small part by their cavalier attitude to alcohol. In earlier, more puritanical times (especially during Prohibition in the US) such attitudes were mildy transgressive as was the detective's readiness for violence, his acquaintance with yeggs and low-lifes, his relatively non-judgemental response to the usual and his (for the time) lack of sexual inhibition. But these guys are all basi-

Hammett in Hollywood, 1940.
(Picture courtesy of Shadow Man: The Life of Dashiell Hammett by Richard Layman)

In 1947 Mickey Spillane introduced the world to Mike Hammer. (Photo by Bonnie West)

cally straight. None of them are likely to seriously challenge the social order (although most of them bitch about it). In the end they all stand for law and order. Their 'tough-guyness' is their guarantee of social mobility, of their freedom to move between and among the classes and underclasses.

Thus the detective must enjoy the confidence of characters from all classes, especially criminal and marginal groups, but at the same time remain committed to the upholding of the law. Clearly, some lines need to be drawn so that in the last analysis he will remain aloof from the criminality of his milieu. Such lines must necessarily be drawn way out on the margins of social life.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SIGNET
Mickey Spillane
VENGEANCE IS MINE
A Sensational New MIKE HAMMER Mystery by the Author of
I, THE JURY and MY GUN IS QUICK

Mickey Spillane's Vengeance Is Mine.

THE THIN WHITE LINE

Drug use is one of the two absolute taboos for the classic tough guy sleuth. (The other is sexual deviance). While his attitudes to alcohol may be tolerant in the extreme, not so to drugs. The hardboiled type will never, ever, willingly take drugs; not reefer, not coke, not hop. Yet dope and dope fiends make frequent appearances in the crime yarn and the PI is savvy to the different drugs and their effects, can pick easily when someone is stoned and usually can name the type of dope.

In the 1890s and early 20th century US cities saw the growth of a true urban lumpenproletariat and with it relatively large scale use of cannabis, cocaine, opium, morphine and heroin. For a long time readily available in patent medicines, these drugs, with the exception of cannabis, had all been criminalised by 1914. The ranks of drug addicts and drug users were greatly swelled after 1918 by the return of narcotics-addicted injured war veterans. Whereas an English gentleman of the Victorian period such as Sherlock Holmes might be forgiven for having a weakness for opium or cocaine, by the 1920s dope use had acquired the taint of irredeemable degeneracy. A series of tabloid scare campaigns appealed to WASP anxieties by linking drug use with the rise of autonomous, unsocialised non-white groups on the fringes of US urban society. Drug use was seen now as the pastime of the most marginal urban groups - unemployed, Blacks, Chinese, Mexicans, as well as transients, petty criminals, musicians and prostitutes. It was around this time that drug addicts truly joined the 'folk demons' of twentieth century life. (The term 'dope fiend' dates from this time).

This, I think, partly accounts for the detective's simultaneous acquaintance with dopers and his staunch refusal to partake. Illicit drugs are the 'thin white line' separating the PI from the yegg. After all, the detective cannot be completely at home in the demi-monde and remain a bona-fide good guy. There has to be something that he will not do. The presence of dopers in the 'classical age' hardboiled detective story enabled the reader of crime fiction to vicariously enter remote and perversely fascinating reaches of the social underclasses and remain confident his (the reader's) vehicle for primary identification would return him safely to the surface world of law and order.

But while the PI never voluntarily takes dope, he is forever being drugged unwittingly. The Mickey Finn is nearly as much a part of the tough guy story as is the lying female. The Op inadvertently ingests a hallucinatory drug in *The Dain Curse*, Marlowe on any number of occasions is drugged and beaten, and so too is Travis McGee. The drugging and beating typically comes after the gumshoe has put himself in a dangerous and vulner-

Robert Mitchum as Marlowe in Farewell My Lovely (1975) with Harry Caesar behind the bar.

able position - arranged to meet an unidentified informant in a lonely place, for example. In fact the alacrity with which he seems to give himself over to forced druggings alerts us that something is going on here. A longing to sample forbidden pleasures? That the detective got smashed against his will meant that he had not sacrificed his return ticket to bourgeois respectability.

Hammett in particular displays a knowledge of hop and hopheads that would be the envy of the average modern day narc. In *The Dain Curse* the Op prescribes a morphine withdrawal program which stipulates a timetable and precise quantities to be taken. The short story *Dead Yellow Women* has a junkie character Dummy Uhl who tries unsuccessfully to pretend to the Op that he is not currently using. The Op is wise however, somehow divining that Dummy is in fact high but has used belladonna drops to dilate his otherwise pinned out pupils. *The Golden Horseshoe* and *Corkscrew* both have dopes as central characters. In the former the Op goes on a three day binge with the addict villain, him drinking liquor, the villain drinking, and smoking hop. Tolerant as the Op is towards dopers, more often than not the doper was the villain in Hammett stories.

And so detective stories went up till the late fifties and into the sixties.

"Hammett in particular displays a knowledge of hop and hopheads that would be the envy of the average modern day narc."

After Spillane's Mike Hammer there did not really seem anywhere for the PI to go and the sixties saw the almost complete disappearance of the hardboiled dick. He was, after all, a prewar sort of bloke really, and Hammer's nastiness, for many readers was reminiscent of that of the embittered, indiscriminately hostile war vet. The sixties generation did not particularly want to read about its fathers. To previous generations the hardboiled sleuth had represented an enviably independent, free-wheeling cultural hero, but the post-war baby-boomers of the sixties were turning to new icons - sophisticated British ladykillers.

SECRET AGENTS & FREAK DETECTIVES

The place previously occupied by the sleuth was in the sixties for a while usurped by the fictional secret agent. He did all the things the PI had done,

jet-setted and took drugs as well. The spies were the first to cross the thin white line.

James Bond used Benzedrine, but his drug use was essentially utilitarian. He used in order to maintain alertness. With Adam Diment's *The Dolly Dolly Spy* however, came a thriller hero who took drugs (hash) for the fun of it, and without apology. The fictional spy had always possessed a highly ambiguous ethical code, much more so than the detective, regardless of how rough and tumble he may have been. (Your average fictional spy makes Philip Marlowe seem like a Rotarian). So drug use was OK for a spy, he operated on the edge anyway. He never had to concern himself overly with legality. And for a new generation of readers who were hanging around Carnaby St popping pills, or at least wished they were, spy heroes came much closer to embodying lifestyle and consumption aspirations than a down-market gumshoe ever could.

By the seventies drug use had leaked out of the American enclaves of the dispossessed urban Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Chicano and white criminal subcultures into new, almost-mainstream global counter-cultures. At the same time (ie late sixties, early seventies) the rise of various Pop movements saw the increasing celebration and valorisation of hitherto neglected pop culture forms, including the Science Fiction and Detective genres. The PI had plenty of camp appeal, but underneath, a new generation of readers detected the undertones of paranoia, disgust, alienation and disease with which they could readily identify.

But the tough-guy detective was such a pre-war type and often darned authoritarian to boot. Who could imagine Philip Marlowe visiting Berkeley campus, or the Op at Woodstock?

Some writers got around the anachronism problem by writing retro - Andrew Bergman sets his two Jack Levine novels in New York in the forties for example. More commonly, writers at least acknowledged post-Woodstock social phenomena, if only to capitalise on new possibilities for titillation. Older tough guys, like Travis McGee, found themselves dealing with burnt out acid-heads, free-loving hippie chicks and degenerate former flower children but inevitably came on like older generation squares. Lew Archer, despite his best efforts to empathise was about as hip as a folk-singing parish priest.

"James Bond used Benzedrine, but his drug use was essentially utilitarian. He used in order to maintain alertness...The fictional spy had always possessed a highly ambiguous ethical code, much more so than the detective, regardless of how rough and tumble he may have been."

A counter-cultural attitude to drug taking began to appear in detective fiction in the early seventies with Roger L Simon's *The Big Fix*. Although in some aspects an exercise in retro, *The Big Fix* managed a flares-wearing, hash-smoking Jewish private detective of radical sympathies in Moses Wine. Simon details a new inventory of commodities and minutiae which includes stereo headphones, Stevie Wonder records, pipes and so on, and a contemporary cast of characters which hosts sinister gurus, former New Left apparatchiks, liberal politicos, rock musicians, as well as the usual gallery of yeggs. Nicholas Meyer's neo-Holmesian (1) *The Seven Per Cent Solution* displayed a post-drug culture awareness of dope and addiction. The title was a reference to the strength of Holmes' preferred decoction of cocaine.

THE NEW AGE GUMSHOE

By the late seventies a few writers had managed to bridge the gap between tough guy fiction of the old school and the newer social realities. Elmore Leonard, old enough to have seen service during WW2, demonstrated a sharp eye (and ear) for the new - be it clothing, interior design, consumer goods, lifestyles, slang, the semiotics of personal style and politics or popular music. Leonard's low key heroes were tough enough (when it came to the crunch) to have old school appeal but were totally modern in their laid back personal honesty and apparent vulnerability.

In a totally different way writers like Lawrence Block and Joe Gores managed to write trad. tough guy yarns that were more than exercises in camp. Block's PI, Mathew Scudder, lives and works in New York, perhaps the one city in the world where it's possible to live as though nothing important has changed in the last fifty years. Gores wrote a dope-orientated, lone wolf PI tale in *Interface*, one of the best and most overlooked detective stories of the seventies. In it Gores cleverly employs a minimalistic Hammett-like style which keeps the narrative brisk and icy cold.

For the genre to really make a comeback, however, other things had to change. In classic gumshoe series, the central character remains the same from book to book. If he does change, it is probably because the writer overlooked something he had written in a previous story. The plots were formulaic (not that there is anything wrong with that - indeed, that is half the appeal) and so was the sleuth. Marlowe does not vary in any significant way from the earliest short stories to the last novel and the Op not at all (if anything, he is boiled even harder towards the end). But by the seventies readers wanted their heroes to change, to grow, as they felt they themselves had. Or should have. To accomplish that, the hero had to alter his trajectory a little. The traditional detective's mission had been to find out 'who done it?', but the modern sleuth was required to ask as well 'Who am I?"

So by the eighties the situation is something like this: the hero must, as ever, be tough, independent and, deep down, highly principled. He cannot be too authoritarian, nor too old. He has to live in an identifiably modern world, possess credibility in the many tribalised factions therein but at the same time be sufficiently alienated to maintain outsider status. On top of all

he has to be prepared to front up for a little personal growth. Which meant not always being tough. A problem.

Hammett had, way back in *The Dain Curse,* committed tough guy sleuths to trenchant opposition to West Coast quackery, pseudo-religious mumbo-jumbo and cultism in any form. So crystals and aromatherapy were out. How then to drag tough guys into the new age?

THE SOBER DETECTIVE

A few things about the old style PI stood out as really neanderthal to the newer sensibility: his appalling attitude to women, his ready recourse to violence as a problem solving tactic and his drinking which, to the health-conscious, body-aware late seventies generation had come to mean 'Loser'. It was no longer possible for the PI to drink with the abandon - or the innocence - of his golden age predecessors. But the detective's track record of alcohol abuse (as it came to be called) could be turned around to provide a neat way of bringing the tough guy up to date. And we see the appearance of the reformed-alky detective. Sober yes, but he couldn't be called square, because he used to drink. At the same time, being recently off the demon drink, the detective was in a position to re-assess his passe attitudes and behaviour patterns.

Leonard's hero, in his 1977 book *Unknown Man No. 89*, is a former alcoholic and current member of Alcoholics Anonymous. At one point in the book he 'busts' after a period of three years abstinence. It is unclear by the end of the book whether his alcoholism is still a problem or not. Other Leonard books from around this time, *Switch* and *Glitz,* also profile alcoholic characters. Significantly, their alcoholism is quite firmly established as a psychopathology, as dysfunction. The bio's tell us that around this time Leonard was dealing with his own alcoholism. (2)

The next few years saw a rash of reformed-alcoholic cops, starting with Frank Furillo in the TV program *Hill St Blues*. Furillo used to be a heavy boozer, the back story revealed, but he had been off the turps for some time, to the occasional regret of his old booze buddies. Like a Leonard hero, Furillo espouses a low-key, nothing-to-prove, one-day-at-a-time philosophy. British TV produced a mostly sober former alcoholic detective shortly after in *Bergerac.* The Brits had previously created a non-macho sleuth in *Shoestring,* whose problem was not so much the alcoholism as some unspecified problem of a psychiatric nature. Like the sober gumshoe though, *Shoestring* could ill afford to stray far from a balanced lifestyle, and was obliged to maintain a personal philosophy of acceptance and forgiveness lest his old trouble reappear. Britain also turned out an answer to *Hill St Blues, The Bill*, which too boasts an alcoholic character, Ted Roach. Ted has been dry for a little while now, but of late has been finding it tough going.

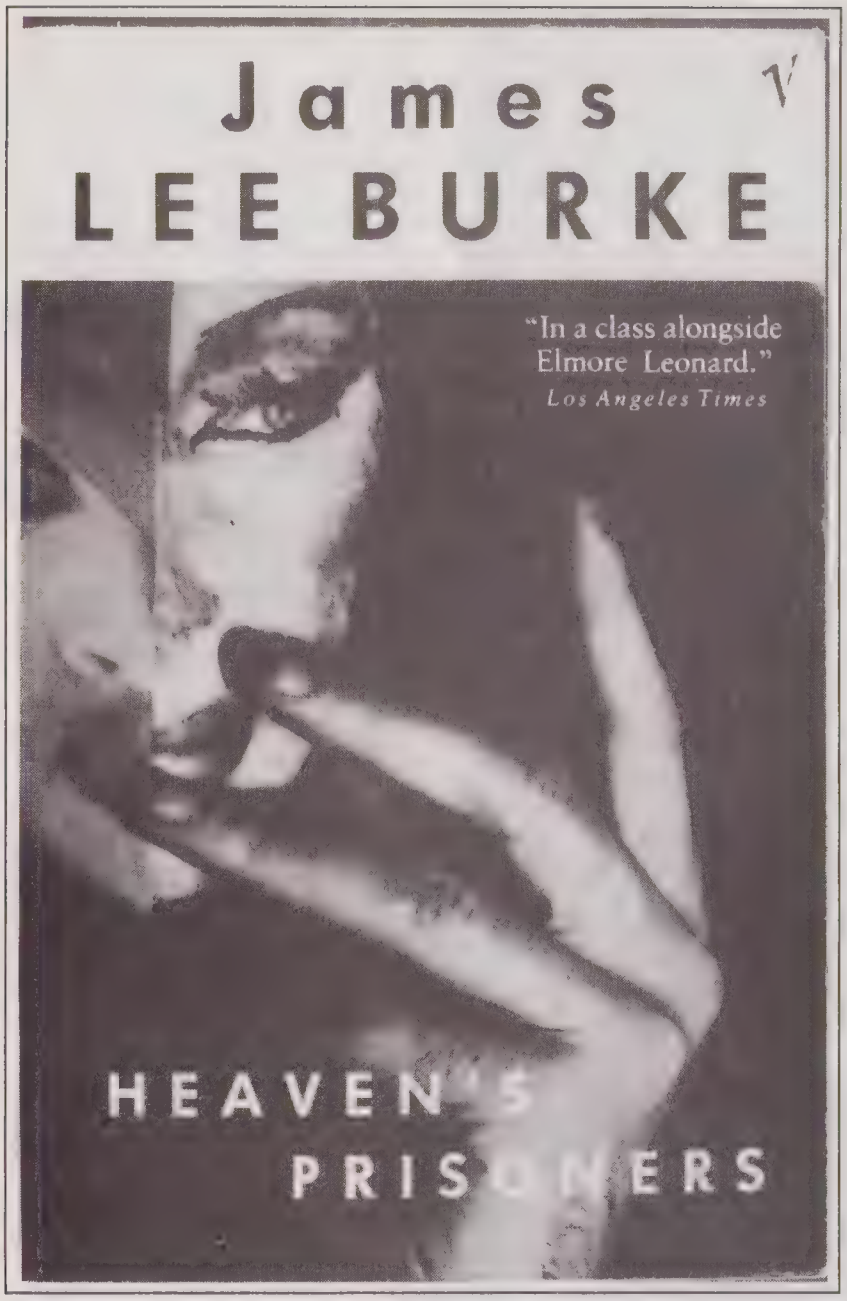
The turning point in the genre though, for me, is Lawrence Block's 1983 novel *Eight Million Ways To Die.* Here we are introduced to an old Block hero, Matt Scudder, the New York private eye. His lifestyle, his friends, his likes and dislikes, his haunts and, most importantly, his drinking have all been well and consistently established in previous novels. This one starts with Matt a few days sober and battling to stay on the wagon. He too is popping along to AA meetings but cannot quite give himself over to the AA philosophy. The main storyline, the actual case, is quite overshadowed by the subplot, which concerns Scudder's struggle to stay sober. It is not giving too much of the story away to reveal that he has only mixed success. About half way through the story he goes back on the grog, an act which, however, ultimately clears up his misgivings as to whether or not he really is an alcoholic. He decides he is. (And still knows it right up to his 1992 caper, *A Dance At The Slaughterhouse* - although he still wrestles with the temptation - SC).

HIS NEW BLOCKBUSTER SUSPENSE THRILLER!
"FIRST-RATE IN ALL WAYS"
—New York Times
BY THE AUTHOR OF A STAB IN THE DARK
LAWRENCE BLOCK

Lawrence Block's Eight Million Ways To Die

Block's plot here follows the time honoured formula to a tee. The detective, through either active interventions or by merely seeing and acknowledging, has brought about permanent changes in the 'real world'. Here though, the descent has also catalysed profound inner changes in the detective and is even more perilous in some ways than the traditional binge/beating/drugging/abduction centrepiece. In this story his very salvation is at stake.

The pattern which begins with Elmore Leonard and crystalises with Block becomes quite clear a few years later with the appearance of James Lee Burke's Cajun cop, Dave Robicheaux in *The Neon Rain*. An intense, troubled man, he is honest and articulate about his emotional make-up but at the same time possesses a capacity for obsessive resentment and explosive violence which would put Mike Hammer to shame. Robicheaux is a reformed alcoholic who, like his predecessors, must enter the literal and metaphorical underworlds to accomplish his job. Like Scudder and Ryan (the hero of



James Lee Burke's Heaven's Prisoners

Unknown Man No. 89) the middle of the story sees Robicheaux drinking again. The ill-fated Robicheaux really pulls off the quadrella - he is abducted *and* beaten *and* drugged and then goes bingeing voluntarily! For Robicheaux sobriety is an hallucinatory and unsettled business which even at its best seems to hover on the edge of delirium tremens. The Cresecent City, the swamps and bayous of Southern Louisiana, the racetracks, juke joints and lowlife bars all secrete a sense of fecund, miasmic menace. His drinking is a really grim business. He does eventually get along to his AA meetings and sobers up, but he has been changed by the events of the story. In the next novel, *Heaven's Prisoners*, we encounter him a year down the track. He has managed to remain sober and to rebuild his life to a degree. Things rapidly get worse for Robicheaux however, as Old Man Trouble has him in his sights again. In this story he gets back on the drink again and, again, then manages to sober up.

By the third novel, *Black Cherry Blues*, a real problem is emerging. As a modern detective hero he must develop both as a character and as a person, and so sooner or later must put down the bottle for good and get on with his life. However, if he does, if he is 'saved' once and for all, is there any need for him to grow anymore? The detective must be deficient in some fundamental way for him ever to work in the hell that is his city. The redeemed detective risks forfeiting his place on the razor's edge and becoming as smug as any trad. gentleman detective. Burke neatly negotiates the dilemma in the third novel by having Robicheaux go on a 'dry drunk' which, we are told, is an affliction to which ex-alcoholics are sometime subject. The dry drunk sees Robicheaux once again overwhelmed by the old existential terror bugaboo. He enters a state of tormented semi-consciousness, nearly allowing his house to burn down in the process. Externally things get as tough for him as they had been in the earlier stories. In the next Robicheaux novel, *A Morning For Flamingos*, he stays sober, although again experiences a few pretty mad moments. Here, as in *Black Cherry Blues*, the main targets for redemption are secondary characters. It will be interesting to see how Burke gets around the problem in the next Robicheaux novel. (Apparently in *Stained White Radiance* Robicheaux is in AA and doesn't have a single drink! - SC)

ADDICT DETECTIVES

"So this isn't the way Sam Spade gets a lead, so what? Somebody always slips the detective a Mickey Finn. What's the difference if I do it myself?"

Jon Hammer, *The Drowned Girl*, 1990

Whilst most modern detectives have learnt the virtues of moderation and prudence, there has appeared recently an anti-yuppie, anti-new age hellraising sleuth in the person of James Crumley's 'poor sad fucker' Milo Milodragovitch. Milo is an unreconstructed poly-drug addict - alcohol, amphetamines, cocaine and marijuana being his preferred poisons. Crumley's books hark back to the screwball excesses of Bellam's Dan Turner and Latimer's William Crane. As those earlier cops drank, so Milo uses drugs - although the humour here is mixed in equal parts with melancholy. Milo knows he is heading down the toilet,

and tells us so often. He harbours no false hopes of salvation.

Now reckless though he is, it is difficult to imagine Milo using heroin. There may be more than one reason for this, and it is beyond the scope of this piece to examine the sociology and semiotics of hard narcotics in genre fiction or real life. Suffice it to say that heroin (and morphine and methadone) use still retains many of the connotations it held in the twenties, including that of the satanic pact. Heroin is to the modern PI roughly what drugs in general were to the PI of the twenties and thirties. Heroin marks out a region of impenetrable, irredeemable, subterranean criminality. The thin white line still holds. To my knowledge, the only breaches of *this* thin white line occur in futuristic narratives.

The first true junky cop appeared in Philip K. Dick's *A Scanner Darkly*. Published in 1977 and set in a believable nineties the book centres around an L.A. undercover narc, Bob Arctor, who had become addicted to a powerful designer drug, Substance-D. The drug, as described by Dick, combines both stimulant and narcotic properties, a fictive composite of smack and speed, and is horrendously addictive. It is interesting though that even among Dick's dead-end dopers, ("the 'good guys' of the story) smack is regarded as a bummer.

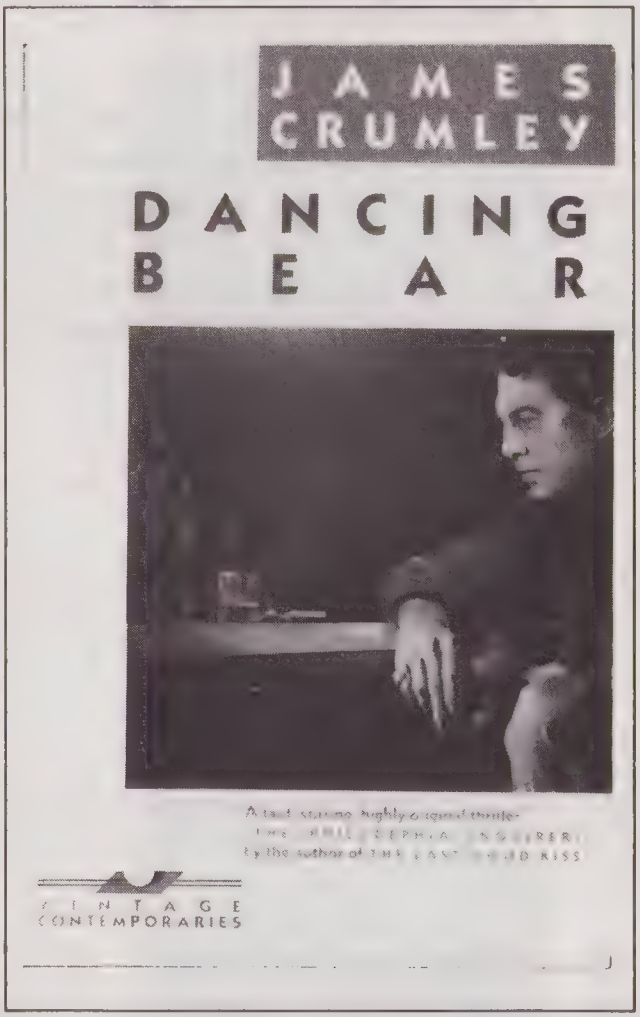
William Gibson in his *Neuromancer* series also writes about drug-addicted protagonists, again the drugs being mega-powerful designer drugs. As in Dick's story, though, you cannot help thinking the writer has amphetamines in mind when he describes the dope. Like Dick's, Gibson's stories are set (comfortably?) in the future.

If Gibson's and Dick's addicts are unregenerate in their habits, they are not ignorant. Whereas the old time tough guys were almost completely unknowing of their 'insides' - physical and emotional - Dick and Gibson's hyped up cowboys know all about their inner workings, at least they could write a pretty convincing science essay about them. They know precisely how their drugs affect them and the biochemical and cognitive processes involved. If the drugs cause them harm, they know precisely how, where and why. For them, drug use represents more than just escapism - it represents a triumph of biochemical engineering over unmediated experience.

"Jon Hammer's comic book The Drowned Girl features a doped out PI, Dick Shamus. His drugs are formaldehyde(!) and methadone. The time frame is a little unclear - it could be the present, but the story has a decidedly futuristic nightmarish aspect to it."

Jon Hammer's comic book *The Drowned Girl* features a doped out PI, Dick Shamus. His drugs are formaldehyde (!) and methadone. The time frame is a little unclear - it could be the present, but the story has a decidedly futuristic nightmarish aspect to it. If any one thing distinguishes the detective, it is the unfailing misreading of the clues. He gets everything wrong.

There has yet to be a present day, competent, unapologetic, practising narcotics addict hero, and maybe there cannot be. A reformed heroin addict PI though, now there's a possibility for the nineties! ■



James Crumley's Dancing Bear

FOOTNOTES

(1) At first sight Holmes would seem to be the exception to the no-dope principle among detectives, but cocaine is never for Holmes a way of life, the way that booze is for the hard-boiled PI. Not until Meyer, that is. Like Nero Wolfe's overeating, Holmes' (very occasional) drug taking is mainly a sign of his extreme intellectual restlessness. His genius entitles him to a few peccadilloes. It is inconceivable, however, that Holmes would get wired in order to solve a case whereas a hard-boiled PI would readily binge drink his way through a caper.
(2) It became commonplace to read in the rock star, actor or writer bio of the eighties that he or she had once had a drug and/or alcohol problem that was now well behind him or her. This at once established (with varying degrees of success) credibility with both the street and the Establishment. Crime writers with major drink/alcohol form include, as well as Leonard, James Ellroy, Eugene Izzi and James Lee Burke.

FIRST KILL

Chet Williamson's First Kill, a powerful story of violence in the woods of northern Pennsylvania during the deer season, has been selected from *Hardboiled. Hardboiled* is an anthology of contemporary Amercian crime fiction edited by the *Mean Streets* team and published by Allen & Unwin. It includes stories by Lawrence Block, Andrew Vachss, Joe R. Lansdale, Julie Smith and a host of other superb writers.

For days now, the hunter had thought about widows and orphaned children, and decided that he would try and see if the man wore a wedding ring. With his 4x Weaver scope, he thought he should be able to catch a glint of gold on the left hand.

However, the Monday after Thanksgiving was often cold in the woods of northern Pennsylvania. Odds were that blaze orange mittens would cover most hands, to be slipped warily off only at the sound of hooves rustling dead leaves. Even then, most men fired rifles with their right hands. A wedding ring would still be covered. Still, he would try to avoid a father, making an effort to show the mercy the earth he loved did not have.

But if he could not see the hand, he would accept whatever target was offered.

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Peter Keats awoke an hour before dawn, pushed in the button of the wind-up alarm clock, and shivered with excitement and the cold. The fire he and his two cabin mates had set the night before in the wood stove was dead, and he was glad he had worn his insulated long underwear in his sleeping bag. He didn't think he could have stood the chilly air against his bare trunk and legs. He woke his friends, slid out of his bunk, and put on two pairs of socks, one cotton, the other heavy wool. He stepped into his thick trousers, then slipped his feet into ankle-high L. L. Bean hunting boots.

Keats was out the front door before the others had disentangled themselves from their sleeping bags. He breathed in the air, reveling in the sharp crispness that stung his throat. He walked up the hill from the cabin to the outhouse, defecated quickly and efficiently, and walked back again, broke the ice in the basin that sat on the railing of the tiny porch, and splashed frigid water on his face. It made him even more wakeful than before.

Back inside, the men joked, ate donuts, and drank the coffee they had made the night before. Then they finished dressing, ending with the heavy coats of safety orange, put wads of toilet paper under their scope covers so the lenses wouldn't fog in the colder outside air, and stepped outside to hunt, and to be hunted.

It took Peter Keats a half-hour of walking in the near darkness to reach

the spot he had chosen the day before, when they had helped each other erect their stands, the elevated platforms in which they would perch and wait for a deer to wander by. One of his friends was a half-mile to the northwest, the other a mile south. Keats could easily hear their shots, and if he did he would hold still for five, ten minutes, waiting even more silently in case of a miss or a wounding, in case the deer should run, limp, or drag itself past his stand.

By the time Peter Keats had climbed onto his perch, he could just make out streaks of rose through the ragged treetops to the east. He settled himself, his Remington pump .760 resting across his legs. His feet dangled over the edge of the stand, fifteen feet above the ground. For comfort's sake, Keats had placed a small, flat pillow under the spot where his knees rested against the sharp edge of the stand.

Keats thought that it seemed colder than it had in years before. He rubbed his fingers against each other inside the heavy mittens, and wished that the orange of his jacket was as warm to the touch as it was to the eye. The deer must really be colorblind if that hue didn't startle them. He had heard other hunters say that it appeared white to the deer's eyes. Well, if it did it did. It didn't much matter, and besides, it was the law.

In his fifty years of deer hunting, Peter Keats had always obeyed the law. His father had taught him that when he had given him his first deer rifle at the age of fourteen. One deer a year, no more. No shooting one for your friend, and no shooting a doe in buck season. Keats had done none of those things, simply because he had never been tempted to. And he had never been tempted, because in his half-century of what he called hunting, he had never shot, nor had he ever wanted to shoot, a deer.

The pattern was set the first year he went hunting with his father. Keats was positioned next to an oak tree, crouching among the acorns on which the deer loved to feed. His father was a half-mile away, and Keats, his heart beating rapidly, waited, waited, feeling youthful erections of excitement come and go. An hour passed, during which Keats stood up several times, stretching his legs. He was standing when he heard the deer approach. He froze, felt the wind on his face from the direction of the sound of breaking leaves, snapping twigs, and saw a buck and two doe push through the brush less than fifty yards away.

He raised his rifle with what felt like the slowness of a watch's second hand, and by the time the buck had cleared the brush, Keats was looking at it through the notch of the open sight. Its smooth coat made it look carved of wood, its brown eyes stared into his like some spirit of the forest, and he felt, holding the deer's life in his fingertip, as though he was defying God, like a vandal in a cathedral. If he pulled the trigger he knew he would violate a far more solemn contract than the one forged between him and his father.

He lowered the gun, and never raised it to a deer again.

Still, he went hunting every year, and patiently bore his fellow hunters' good-natured teasing. He suspected that the old friends he was with now knew the truth, for he no longer even fired a shot or two to make them think he had tried but failed. He had had plenty of chances over the years, and his heart still pounded when he saw a buck approach, pass by him, pause, look up, startled, and run. But he did not lift his loaded rifle to his shoulder.

"Its smooth coat made it look carved of wood, its brown eyes stared into his like some spirit of the forest...he felt, holding the deers life in his fingertip, as though he was defying God, like a vandal in a cathedral. If he pulled the trigger he knew he would violate a far more solemn contract than the one forged between him and his father."

And it was loaded, always. Every year he went through the ritual of sighting in the rifle at the sportsman's club to which he belonged, cleaning it, taking out the same bullets from the cabinet, bullets that had turned green where lead met brass, and shooting at the targets on the range, until his off-hand scores equaled those of men years his junior.

Keats loved the ritual, the preparations, the chance to be with his friends and by himself. His two companions with whom he had come to Potter County shared his love of the outdoors, but he seldom saw them outside of deer season, so that when they did get together there was much to catch up on.

But the solitude was the best part, the sense that there was no one but him in the world to see the sky grow brighter, feel the air become less bitterly cold, behold the dread miracle of winter. He sat and waited, and while he was alert to the sounds of the woods, he also escaped into himself, his past, his thoughts and memories of seasons before.

He thought of his wife, of when they had both been young, though no happier than they were now, of the job at the steel mill he had held for over thirty years before he had retired four years ago, of his church where he served on the budget committee, of his three grandchildren, of the oldest boy who wanted to go hunting with him next year when he was old enough.

Peter Keats thought of many things as the morning brightened, until the sun slashed bright streaks through the latticework of branches, bathing his orange garb with fire, making him a perfect target.

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The hunter saw the man in the tree stand just before 7.30. Ever since dawn he had been moving stealthily, stalking. It was estimated that fifty thousand people would be roaming through the quarter million acres of Potter County's state forests today. Since that averaged out to one hunter per five acres, it was only natural that they would come across each other now and again.

That was what calmed and excited

and worried the hunter. It calmed him because no one would take a second look at another man dressed in orange; it excited him because the statistic made it certain that he would find game; and it worried him that the game might be *too* plentiful, tripping over one another in the haste for their own prey. A herd would do the hunter no good. He had to find a single animal, cut off from the rest.

That was when he saw the man in the tree. Thank God, he thought, for the orange. Its warm brightness protected him on the cold ground, marked his targets in the chilly air.

He stepped behind a thick-boled pine tree, and peered out at the man in the tree-stand seventy yards away. The man gave no indication that he had seen the hunter.

The hunter slipped the glove from his right hand, put it into his coat pocket, and wadded small bits of wax into his ears. Then he lifted his rifle, a Ruger Model 77, 7 mm. magnum, and leaned against the tree. He placed his right cheek against the smooth walnut stock, and looked through the Weaver scope with his right eye.

The man in the stand did not fill the field of vision, but the hunter could make out certain details. The man was older, in his sixties, and had probably killed deer for many years. The hunter found a poetic justice in that fact. His hands were mittened, so the hunter could not tell if he wore a ring. Probably married, the hunter thought. He looked like a married man, happy to be alone in the woods. The man had a little gray moustache, and wore glasses with black frames. His booted feet dangled over the edge of the stand, and he swung them back and forth like a child, a movement that any deer would notice immediately. The man did not appear likely to bag a buck this year.

Still, he was hunting deer, so it was the hunter's obligation to hunt him. Maybe he was only a harmless old man who enjoyed sitting in a tree house holding a loaded rifle, but surely he had taken his toll over the years. Now it was pay-back time.

The hunter flicked off the safety, breathed in icy air, leaned against the tree so that his forehead rubbed roughly against the bark, moved his Ruger in a series of infinitesimal motions until the plain of blaze orange was settled directly under the scope's cross hair. Only then did he place his bare finger on the cold metal of the trigger, let out half his breath in a white puff, hold the rest, and begin, very gently, to squeeze. When he had exerted enough pressure, the firing pin descended, the powder ignited, the bullet left the barrel and flew across the seventy yards in the merest fraction of a second, meeting the man in the tree, expanding the instant it struck the orange jacket, widening as it tore through flesh and muscle and bone. The man flew backwards into a red cloud of himself, and fell from the tree, landing on the dry leaves below like a sack of lime.

"Still, he was hunting deer, so it was the hunter's obligation to hunt him. Maybe he was only a harmless old man who enjoyed sitting in a tree house holding a loaded rifle, but surely he had taken his toll over the years. Now it was pay-back time."

The hunter held his pose for a moment, the sound of the explosion reverberating like a great gong. Then he operated the bolt and lowered the rifle so that he still looked through the scope at the man on the ground, ready to fire a second shot at the hint of motion.

There was none. It had been a clean, quick kill.

From the corner of his eye, he had seen the spent shell fly from the ejector, and it took him only a moment to find the gleaming brass amid the floor of dead pine needles. He dropped it into his pocket and walked to the tree-stand, pulling the wax wads from his ears. Although he listened intently, he heard no other sounds, neither voices nor foosteps in dead leaves. No, no one would come. No one would leave their stands and jeopardize their own chances of making a kill. It would be safe to do the field dressing.

It was extraordinary, he thought, the damage a single, small projectile could do to a human body. The man had not moved since he had fallen, and the glassy stare told the hunter he was dead. Heart and lungs had been ripped through, and the blood must have ceased its pumping to the brain instantly. He hoped the man had felt little pain, only one, short, sharp, and savage, before he lost consciousness and his life.

The hunter stood for a long time, looking down at the first man he had ever killed, indeed ever even harmed. He thought he had readied himself for it, but no philosophy, no cause firmly and chokingly believed in, had prepared him for this moment. It had prepared him for the stalking, the sighting, even the pulling of the trigger, but not this. He struggled to stop shaking, told himself it was only the cold, that he could not be shaking from emotion because he had none. He was a machine that had functioned as it was supposed to, and would continue to do so.

Again he repeated his manifesto to himself, like a mantra of destruction, all the proper words about the purity of life, the reverence for nature, the abomination of hunting in a country where no one need do so to eat, the thousands of animals wounded and not found, dying slowly and painfully. He thought about the protests he had made with the others, the signs and speeches that had done nothing to slow the annual slaughter, thought about his decision to do more, administer true justice, turn the tables on the hunters, show them all too clearly just what they were doing to another species, going over it again and again in his mind, establishing his alibi, changing his appearance, going far, far from where he lived, to a place where no one knew him, a place rich with human game, where he could make his kill, and show that any species could be preyed upon.

And now he had killed, and now he must continue, be strong, finish the lesson, plant the seeds of legend and terror.

There. He was all right now, ready to do what had to be done.

He propped his Ruger against the tree and held the stand, put on both gloves, and knelt by the side of the dead man. He unsnapped the man's jacket, grasped his neck, hauled him to a sitting position, and removed the

sodden mass of cotton shell and goose down. The hole in the man's back was greater than the hunter had imagined.

He let the body flop back onto the bloody leaves, and saw that some blood on the man's small moustache had frozen. It looked, thought the hunter, as though he had cut his lip shaving.

The hunter took a horn-handled knife with a five-inch blade from its sheath, and tried to forget that what lay before him was a human being, tried to think of it only as a slaughtered animal, as the other hunters would think of the deer they had shot.

He cut open the dead man's sweater, shirt, and thermal undershirt, exposing the pallid flesh and the entrance wound to the freezing air. He yanked the upper clothing off the body, then removed the boots and socks, and sliced through the waistband of the trousers, tugging them off, along with the long underwear, until the corpse lay naked on the frozen bed of leaves. The hunter had read over and over about field dressing, and now he would recreate the procedure. It wouldn't be perfect, for the anatomies of deer and men were different. But they would see, and realize, and tell the tale, so that everyone would know there was an avenger in the forest.

A true field dressing would have begun with cutting the penis and scrotum free, then scoring around the anus, but the hunter wanted no hints of sexual psychosis to dilute the true purpose of his act. He left the genitals intact, and instead slipped the razor sharp knife beneath the skin of the lower abdomen. Blade up, he slid the knife through the flesh until it struck the breastbone, exposing a layer of yellow fat and muscle.

He had not reckoned on the fat. It looked greasy and slimy, and although he thought the presence of blood on his gloves would arouse no curiosity, the same could not be said for the remnants of fat. So he took off the gloves and lay them next to the butt of his rifle. When he was finished, he would wipe his hands as best he could with the dead leaves.

The incision had drawn back the skin, and the warm, moist organs steamed in the cold air, like clouds rising from a valley. The hunter rolled up his right sleeve, made a few quick, short cuts, and lifted away the fat and the sheet of muscle beneath it. His cold hands nearly burned when he touched the hot, wet innards, and for a moment the steam rose from his hands and forearms. He then cut the diaphragm away from the rib cage, and reached up inside the chest until he found the esophagus and windpipe, both of which he severed, accidentally nicking the palm of his left hand in the confined space. He pulled both tubes back and out, and the lungs, now deflated sacks, followed. It was nearly as easy as the books had said.

A little more cutting of the membranes removed the diaphragm, and in another moment he was able to work the heart free and remove it. Then he reached in with both hands, as though he was embracing the carcass, and lifted most of the viscera out, except for the lower intestine, which was still attached to the anus. He dropped the innards on the leaves, where the smoking, multi-hued mound settled itself like a nest of lazy snakes in sunshine. Then he picked up the knife again, intending to sever the recalcitrant lower bowel, when he heard a crunch of leaves behind him, and a voice. The hunter turned his head and saw, twenty feet away, a man with a gray beard, dressed in blaze orange, holding a rifle pointed at the ground.

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When Peter Keats had heard the single shot from the south, he had listened for more, for the signals that he and his friend there had established. If Keats heard one, he could assume it was a single killing shot. If two, a downing shot and a finishing shot. But if three, a miss. His friend's hands were arthritic, especially in the cold, and he could not begin to field dress a deer. Keats had offered to do the gutting if necessary, and the single shot had told him it was.

It had taken Keats nearly fifteen minutes to walk the mile between the two stands, and when he had seen the figure bent over something red and white he had thought that his friend must have already begun. But he saw quickly that the kneeling man was smaller and narrower through the shoulders than his friend, and Keats walked more quietly, stepping on exposed rocks and patches of pine needles that offered no crisp, betraying resistance.

When he saw his friend, he could not believe it, and said, "God," and stepped on dry leaves. The kneeling man turned then, and looked at him over his right shoulder, and Keats could see his red and glistening hands and forearms.

"What..." Keats began to say, and the man twisted the other way, to his left, toward the tree against which his rifle leaned, stretched, his left hand sliding on the ground as he tried to grasp the rifle's grip with his wet, slippery right hand. He came around toward Keats, one knee on the ground, left leg extended, the barrel bobbing in his efforts to grasp the gun securely.

But before its dark eye could look at Keats, he had raised his Remington, flicked off the safety, and fired before his rifle stopped its motion. The sound of the shot hammered his unprotected ears, and he pressed his eyes shut, waiting to feel the man's bullet tear into him.

The answering shot assaulted his deafened ears, but he felt no pain, and when he opened his eyes he saw the man lying on the ground, still gripping his rifle, blood streaming from a hole in his torn neck like a parasitic serpent escaping its host.

Slowly he lowered his rifle and looked at the two dead men. Then, very softly, he began to cry. He cried for a long time, the hot tears quickly cooling on his stubbly cheeks in the winter air.

Peter Keats had made his first kill.

■

CHET WILLIAMSON'S latest novel is *Reign* (Dark Harvest), which *Publisher's Weekly* called a "thoroughly enjoyable novel...elegant, inventive...sure to satisfy." His other novels include *Dreamthorp, Ash Wednesday, Lowland Rider, Soulstorm,* and *McKain's Dilemma.* Over sixty of his short stories have appeared in such magazines as *The New Yorker, Playboy, Esquire, Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, Twilight Zone,* and many other magazines and anthologies. He has been a final nominee for the World Fantasy Award and the Mystery Writers of America Edgar Allan Poe Award, and he has received six Bram Stoker Award nominations from the Horror Writers of America. He lives in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania with his wife Laurie and son Colin.

JEAN BEDFORD TURNS TO CRIME

Jean Bedford, author of two Anna Southwood crime novels - *Worse Than Death* and *To Make A Killing* - talks to Stuart Coupe about how she's trying to create a combination of the clue puzzle mystery and the traditional private eye novel.

STUART COUPE: What gave you the impetus for writing a crime novel? There hasn't been any crime element in your earlier books has there?

JEAN BEDFORD: Not really, just people suiciding sometimes (laughs). My first novel was about the Kelly's so I suppose you could call that a crime novel. The real impetus came from Nikki Christer at Angus & Robertson. I was working with her as an editor on the Blacklist series and she asked me if I'd ever thought about writing a crime novel. I hadn't really but a couple of years before I had thought of writing a crime character for television with a friend of mine. We'd worked out a few really dumb scenarios and a list of characters. We couldn't get anyone interested so we dropped the idea. When Nikki suggested I write a crime novel I went back to what I had done and retrieved a couple of the characters and at least one of the plots. Angus & Robertson gave me a three book contract on the basis of a one page outline which showed terrific faith in me and that's why I had a go at it. I was working on a so-called serious novel and that was going very slowly. I often have periods of two or three months when I can't work on that sort of writing and the first Anna book filled in one of those gaps. It was terrific because I wrote *Worse Than Death* and then went back to the other book refreshed and keen again.

SC: Was Anna Southwood one of the characters in the TV series you'd been working on?

JB: Yes, but she was very different. The idea we had was a sort of Nero-Wolfe-type-thing, where the female detective really came across with the brains, but people thought the Archie Goodwin character with the muscle and the brawn ran the agency.

SC: Tom Kelly gets a big credit in *Worse Than Death*. What was his role?

JB: He's a lawyer and he was there because I wasn't confident about getting legal and police procedural things right. He didn't do any writing but helped a lot with the background and came up with a few good sub-plot ideas. One of his ideas was to add a bit of necrophilia in the funeral parlour. I said I wouldn't put that it - this was family entertainment (laughs). But I think with the second one, one of the reasons I didn't need to collaborate with anyone was that I decided I didn't care very much about the procedural and legal detail and I figured I could check things with Peter (Corris) if I felt the need.

SC: I remember you saying just before *Worse Than Death* came out that you were finding the plotting difficult.

JB: Yes I did find the plotting difficult but the actual writing I found really pleasurable, much more so than the other sort of writing I do which is blood-out-of-a-stone stuff. I like intricate plots and sub-plots so that is hard to work out - things like who's really done what to who.

SC: So you plot pretty thoroughly beforehand?

JB: Not in total detail but I know what the real plot is and who's done things.

SC: Are the incidents in *To Make A Killing* in any way based on real characters and events?

JB: The development scam actually happened the other way around a few years ago. A Council and developers were involved. The council had passed all sorts of new regulations about zoning and it turned out their mates, who were developers, owned this land...it was in the papers so I don't think I can be sued. And anyway I made up another municipality. I wanted to have that as the outside plot because it's good to get at those people if you can.

SC: Do you write the books quickly?

JB: Yes. For me. Normally it takes me three years to write a novel but I wrote *Worse Than Death* in three months and with *To Make A Killing* the first draft only took six weeks. I found that once I had the plot sorted out it was really just a case of sitting down and writing every day and it came out pretty easily.

SC: You've read crime fiction for a long time so why did it take so long to attempt a novel yourself?

JB: It's surprising to me now that I didn't try and write one earlier because I've read crime fiction all my life, ever since I started on my mother's Agatha Christie's. I don't think I would have been confident enough to try writing a crime novel until I had a few novels under my belt.
SC: What sort of crime fiction have you read?
JB: Everybody! I read a lot of English country house and clue puzzle but I also read a lot of the American tough guys - private eye books, serial killer. I'm reading Robert Campbell's *Alice In La La Land* at the moment.
SC: Anna mentions Dorothy Sayers and Ngaio Marsh in *To Make A Killing.* Does that reflect your tastes?
JB: She mentions the country house style crime fiction written by women. I've had her reading mostly the ladies. The posh detective stuff.
SC: In *To Make A Killing* you seem far more comfortable with the character of Anna.
JB: She developed in the first book. I don't think I really knew who she was going to be and I still had an overhang of what she was going to be like in the television series. But by the time I came to write this one I had a good idea of who she was.
SC: Prior to writing these books you already had a reputation as a writer of 'real' books. Have you found people being dismissive of the crime novels and wondering why you're doing them?
JB: Some people seem to completely discount them because they're crime fiction. They think I'm just doing them for fun. I often get asked why, as a serious writer, I started writing crime fiction. Most people are fairly accepting of it. There are some people who think I must be doing it for the money but of course you're not doing it for the money, especially in Australia!
SC: Have you started work on the third Anna book?
JB: No I've really got to finish this 'serious' book before I start work on another Anna. I've got a vague idea for it but that's all.
SC: Do you envisage Anna being an on-going character?
JB: If A & R decide they want to continue with it after the third book I'd be really happy to do so, but I don't know that I'm so attached to her as a character that I'd press on if it meant difficulty trying to find new publishers. I've got a couple of ideas for other types of thrillers which I'd like to try. One is in the Barbara Vine/Ruth Rendell area - a bit more of a psychological thriller. I've also got an idea for a serial killer book.
SC: In my review of *To Make A Killing* in the *Sydney Morning Herald* I compared the labyrinth type plot and the fact that there were elements that stretched back decades as being Ross Macdonald-like. Was that accurate?
JB: He's very influential. I've read all the Ross Macdonald books...all the Chandler's...all the Hammett's. I love Ross Macdonald and it was very flattering to be compared with him in that way. What I'm trying to do with my detective novels is make them into a combination of the English clue puzzle and the Ross Macdonald style. I'm trying to meld the two so the private eye doesn't have to be tough and out on the street, but is more outside than the Miss Marple's of the world.
SC: A number of people have commented that Anna seems to spend half her life in the bath!!
JB: I take lots of baths too! People say she drinks too much as well which annoys me. She has two or three glasses of Reisling of an evening and perhaps a bit more if she goes out to dinner. But she actually drinks far more black coffee than she does wine. There seems to be some new wowserism in the air which says that private eyes shouldn't drink. Peter thinks it's because the fashion today is to have tough guy private eyes who are in AA programs and for them not to have a drink is constant torture. But in the Anna books she just casually has a few drinks but it seems that people's consciousness can't cope with that anymore. It's supposed to be this demon that you're struggling with - or you're supposed to be this absolutely uncontrollable drunk who's given up the struggle. But to casually drink just isn't

"What I'm trying to do with my detective novels is make them into a combination of the English clue puzzle and the Ross Macdonald style. I'm trying to meld the two so the private eye doesn't have to be tough and out on the street, but is more outside than the Miss Marple's of the world."

MAIGRET

MENDER OF DESTINIES

Georges Simenon, author of the Maigret stories, was the best-selling writer in the world. Before his death in 1989 Simenon wrote 193 novels and his work was praised by Celine, T. S. Eliot, Somerset Maugham, Fellini and Henry Miller. Andre Gide described him as 'the greatest novelist we have had this century.' Roderic Campbell offers this appreciation of Maigret and his creator.

It was a typically cold, drizzly February evening as the 400 invited guests, who included the leading figures in Parisian literary, artistic and theatrical circles as well as high-ranking police officials, began to arrive for a most unusual book launch. The raffish, low-life atmosphere of a Negro nightclub in Montparnasse was the setting for this event, just 60 years ago, in 1931: a glittering ball that became the sensation of Paris and launched the career of one of crime fiction's most celebrated police detectives.

On the tiny nightclub floor the guests jostled for space with over 700 gatecrashers, all dancing the night away to the rhythms of the *beguine* and the *java.* Champagne, whisky and caviar were laid on in abundance and a champagne breakfast at eight o'clock the next morning brought the revels to a close. As a publicity stunt, it was wildly successful; overnight, the name of Commissaire Jules Maigret was on everyone's lips and blazoned in all the morning papers.

However, the event was not without its ironic overtones. The ball had as its motif 'law and order', being called the *Bal Anthropometrique* after Bertillon's system of physical identification then used by the French police. Invitations had been issued on police summons forms; guests were fingerprinted on arrival and the nightclub was decorated with such police paraphernalia as handcuffs and batons.

But its most conscious irony, perhaps fully intended by its instigator, Georges Simenon, a 28-year-old writer and journalist known so far for his prolific output of pulp novels, lay in its blatant mingling of social and moral milieus. Gatecrashers and guests, alike, must have been amused by the incongruity between such a motif and the setting, where rubbing shoulders with each other were to be found the famous and the infamous, police and gangsters, the respectable bourgeois surface of Parisian life with its sleazier, more unprepossessing criminal subsurface.

And yet, looking back from this vantage point of time, it does not seem so unlikely a context for the appearance of Commissaire Maigret. He was a policeman whose own investigations carried him into both worlds, and he knew that the step from one world into the other was not, after all, such a great one. In its own way, this event seems symbolic of how those different worlds were continually to intersect in Maigret's life and work and in the life of his creator, Georges Simenon.

Maigret and the Millionaires was one case that drew Maigret into a world where money and influence is the measure of social status and disdainful self-assurance is a badge of membership. The mysterious death of an English millionaire in an exclusive hotel had been difficult to investigate. At the outset, Mr Arnold, the dead man's friend, had tried to humiliate him, by pulling rank. But Maigret finally manages to trick Arnold into confessing to the murder. But there is no sense of elation or triumph; no attempt to repay the humiliation. *'The Englishman sat huddled in his chair; he had suddenly aged, and every minute he seemed to be losing that ... indescribable quality of ease and self-assurance, that gloss that distinguishes those who belong to a certain social class and who stay in Grand Hotels ...Now he was nothing but a mere man, a broken unhappy man who had lost the game.'*

Maigret has achieved all he set out to do: bring in the murderer. What

happens from then on - the depositions and due legal process - concerns him not at all: that he can leave in the hands of others. He is going home. *'It was Lapointe who noticed that Maigret, as he went by, laid his hand for an instant, as though absent-mindedly, on Arnold's shoulder.'* Maigret has a job to do, but he is not impassive to human suffering.

So, similarly, when Peter the Lett begged Maigret not to take him in, Maigret allowed him another way out. Peter was one of those morally complex individuals, typical it now seems of the 1930s, who had the chameleon-like ability to move easily between greatly contrasting social milieus. In each part he played he was perfect - whether as a sleek, well-groomed international financier in the Grand Hotels, or as a poor emigrant in squalid back-alleys of Paris, or as an affectionate bourgeois husband in a small provincial town - and led Maigret a merry dance before finally being cornered. Maigret pushes his service revolver across the table, tactily turning away as Peter shoots himself (*Maigret and the Enigmatic Lett*).

In all this, Maigret neither judges nor condemns those who commit the crimes he investigates. That is not his role. '*What I want to stress*', he says (in *Maigret's Memoirs*), '*is that our behaviour towards those with whom we have to deal involved neither sentimentality nor hardness, neither hatred nor pity in the usual sense of that word.*' And not even curiosity, he adds elsewhere. He knows that in the real world there is nothing black or white about people's character, no matter what milieu they operate in. But for some circumstances occurring at a particular point in time, things might well have turned out otherwise for Arnold, for Peter, for any of them. Thus, he observes of Else, the tough gang-leader in *Night at the Crossroads: 'She could have become something extraordinary...Had it not been for those back-fires, as it were...like reminders of the lower depths'.*

For Maigret, the key to solving a crime is not 'whodunnit' but why it was done: what human interaction set in train the events that ended with the crime. '*In the course of certain investigation*', he says (*Maigret's Memoirs*), '*I have sometimes spent more time over the family and background of a suspect than over the suspect himself, and this has often provided the key to what otherwise might have remained a mystery.*'

Simenon, May 1955. Picture from 'The Man Who Wasn't Maigret : A Portrait of Georges Simenon by Patrick Marnham

Maigret in Montmartre illustrates this process well. Here, though, it was in the victims' pasts that he discovered the events many years earlier motivating the present murders. This led him finally to the murderer whom we never see until the last pages of the book.

Inevitably, as Maigret acknowledges, such intensive delving into people's lives creates a bond, which he calls 'a kind of family feeling', between a policeman and his quarry. The idea that the police and the criminals they pursue are opposite sides of the same coin is now commonplace, in crime fiction as in real life. But Maigret's concept of professional duty, his duty as an official, means that there is never any suggestion of corruption. It is not that Maigret is

unaware of the potential ironies in such a relationship. *'Don't misunderstand me. We are on different sides of the barricade, of course. But we also to some extent share the same hardships.'* he says (*Maigret's Memoirs*). *'The prostitute on the Boulevard de Clichy and the policeman who is watching her both have bad shoes and both have aching feet from trudging along miles of asphalt. They have to endure the same rain, the same icy wind. Evening and night wear the same hue for both of them, and they see with almost identical eyes the seamy side of the crowd that streams past them.'*

For Maigret stories this bond is important on two levels. There is the more generalised, but nonetheless very tangible, sense of shared experience: the physical comfort and hard grind suggested by those aching, wet feet and weary, but constantly alert glances. This unglamourous, darker side - and sheer drudgery - of much police work is a recurring motif in the stories, conveyed so effectively that it tends to reinforce not only that 'family feeling' but also their realistic background mood. And Maigret himself had his share of it, on the beat early in his career. Indeed, it remains a feature of his investigations: nights spent trudging in the sleet, shadowing someone, or hours on end grilling a suspect. But, on another level, this bond has particular significance for Maigret and the unconventional way he conducts a case.

Maigret's investigatory style is unconventional for a police detective, and it is peculiarly his own. In some ways it is anti-method, rather than methodical. He does not start with a hypothesis based on forensic information or built up by a series of brilliant deductions. Instead, slowly and patiently, he sets about immersing himself in what he calls the 'atmosphere of the crime'. *'In practically every case', he says, 'the process is the same. You have to know. To know the milieu in which a crime has been committed, to know the way of life, the habits, morals, reactions of the people involved in it, whether victims or criminals or merely witnesses. To enter into their world without surprise, easy, and to speak its language naturally.' (Maigret's Memoirs).* The technique Maigret adopts in order to know these people is to insinuate himself, as it were, beneath the skin of each one until he learns to see as they do. Thus, he amasses all he can discover about everyone connected to the crime, and broods on it until all this dense, confused mass of information falls into place and osmotically, so to speak, produces the solution: *'I will know the murderer when I know the victim'*, he says in *Maigret Stonewalled.*

This creative process, relying on a sudden insightful breakthrough, is often described by Simenon as resembling photographic developing: the blank sheet under chemical reaction slowly darkens with blurred, indecipherable forms before finally, and suddenly, becoming defined and focused. Maigret's own explanation is typically prosaic. Asked whether he has a plan (in the story *'Stan the Killer'*), Maigret replies: *'You know, chief, that I gave up having ideas a long time ago. I just go about sniffing. Some people think I'm waiting for inspiration, but they're wrong. What I'm waiting for is the significant fact which never fails to emerge.'*

What makes it work so effectively as a method of investigation is the way it draws on Maigret's particular strengths as a character: his humanity and sympathetic understanding of human behaviour, his intimate knowledge of milieus, and his sense of professionalism. Maigret's success as an investigator - and much of the interest he evokes as a fictional detective - derives from the identification of Maigret with his method: the two are, in effect, inseparable. Maigret becomes so immersed in the 'atmosphere of the crime' that he himself becomes a part of that atmosphere. And the readers, too (more especially in the earlier, pre-1950s books), are vicariously drawn into this process because everything unfolds only through Maigret's eyes: just as he does, we gradually build up a picture of the people involved, their interaction and its consequences. Progressively, we learn about what nowadays we might call the 'culture' of a crime, which is why these books are as much about the nature of human society as they are about crime.

Maigret is not cynical about human nature. But he has a job to do: as a public servant, he is paid to perform a specific duty. 'With all due deference to novelists', Maigret insists, ' a detective is, above all, a professional. He is an official.' Simenon stressed this side of Maigret, remarking that, of the actors who played Maigret on film, Pierre Renoir (in Jean Renoir's *La Nuit du carrefour*', 1932) was the closest 'because he understood that Maigret was a civil servant and made him behave like one.' Maigret's job was to prevent malefactors from disrupting the social order by getting away with their crimes or perpetrating further ones. No more than that. And this is why he invites no personal emotion in the subjects of his investigations: 'neither sentimentality nor hardness', as he says, 'neither hatred or pity'. Therefore, however convincingly he may enter the milieu and learn its language, as an official he must also always stand apart from it. To do otherwise would lead to judgements of one kind or another; one might become embroiled, and that is not professional. Maigret's view of his role is straightforward (*Maigret's Memoirs): 'Utterly rotten individuals are rare ... As for the rest, I tried to prevent them from doing too much harm and to see to it that they paid for the harm they had already done. After which, surely, we've settled our accounts.'* This is why Simenon describes him (in *Maigret's First Case*) as *'a mender of destinies'.*

But what is also intriguing about Maigret is that, finding himself at a point where these two worlds intersect, he is never completely at home in either one. The curiously equivocal

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relationships of his professional life are reflected in his domestic life, too: in some way he seems to stand apart from both. Although, as an official he is ostensibly a bourgeois, the very fact of belonging, in some way, to that other 'family' makes him to some extent an outsider in his own milieu: 'I belong to that social group, of course, to what are known as respectable people. But I know the others too, I know them well enough for a certain contact to exist between myself and them.'

There is a degree of ambiguity about Maigret's position, which seems intentional, almost subversive even, on Simenon's part. A police official Maigret may be, but certainly not a conventional one; nor does he wholly subscribe to the sorts of attitudes that might be expected of one in his social position. Although police investigations are normally team-work, he follows his own methods; he obstinately prefers his glass of *marc* or *calvados* to the whisky or brandy considered more fitting for the bourgeois sideboards. In fact, above all else, Maigret is an individualist; he is someone who stands aside from conventions in order to stake out his own moral ground. This is why, for instance, he can take actions such as allowing Peter the Lett to escape the due legal processes. Maigret himself speaks of a police official's life as being *'balanced between two worlds'*, adding, *'It's a strange situation about which I have sometimes felt uneasy' (Maigret's Memoirs)*. And it is one aspect of Maigret that reveals a point of contact between him and his creator, Simenon, whose life had its own equivocal aspects.

A reading of Simenon's life leaves one with the impression that he, too, lived his life in some kind of shifting middle ground 'between two worlds'; but, for him, one of these worlds served as a constantly changing mask beneath which the other more clandestine world lay concealed. Simenon all his life liked to play roles and provide contradictory information about himself. What he liked to conceal - from those closest to him and anyone else - was the clandestine life he led trawling the undersides of society for sexual gratification. There was something very obsessive about his sexual appetite: in late life he boasted of having 'had' 10,000 women, the majority of whom were prostitutes. Whatever the truth of this claim, there is little doubt that he had extensive first-hand experience of life in the most sordid districts, in the haunts of the criminal underclass, of practically every place he lived in or visited.

Seated on the floor of his study at Shadow Rock Farm in 1953. His new titles were selling over half a million copies each in France alone. His world sales were running at three million a year. (Picture from 'The Man Who Wasn't Maigret: A Portrait of Georges Simenon' by Patrick Marnham.)

Simenon seems to have lived a life in which two contrary worlds mingled in him but never crossed over, creating an inner tension that probably fuelled his prodigious creative output of almost 200 novels, including 84 Maigret novels.

Simenon's method of work never changed, and he always wrote at great speed. It is said no novel he wrote took longer than 11 days (with 3-4 days for revision later). All he ever started off with was names for the main characters and some streets, jotted down on an old envelope. Then he started writing, generally completing a chapter a day. As he wrote, the story took shape, with Simenon effectively living out each part by putting himself inside the mind of each character. He never had any idea - any more than Maigret, or the reader - of how the story would proceed from one chapter to the next; so, he never knew who the murderer was before Maigret. Events unfolded for Simenon just as they do

for Maigret and for us, the readers. In this way, Simenon's creative method precisely parallel's Maigret's investigatory methods. And it is this approach, together with his undoubted writing skills and speed, that contribute to the sharp focus the best of these stories have.

That same concentration of effect, the lack of redundancy, is a feature of his writing style. By the time he started writing Maigret stories in 1930, Simenon had already honed his style on an enormous output of pulp novels, appearing at one stage under 17 pseudonyms. He had learned to strip his prose down to its essentials, ruthlessly cutting to concrete images and language. '*If it rains, I write, "It rains": you will not find in my books drops of water that transform themselves into pearls ... I want nothing that resembles literature.*' His prose has a leanness and an edge that allows him to rapidly sketch a location an interaction or a mood, in such a way that it becomes almost palpably real. Description and narration are tightly written, never holding back the flow of the story, which largely unfolds in direct speech. Indeed, in the earlier stories the author is almost invisible, using Maigret as a kind of witness to all that takes place. In the later novels, however, there is a change in emphasis as Maigret moves more centre-stage and the level of authorial presence increases.

Simenon's original interest in creating Maigret was not in the genre of crime writing as such. Crime was a convenient context within which to tackle what really intrigued him: its clear-cut conventions enabled him to assemble a group of characters within a given narrative framework and probe beneath the surface of their lives. The minutiae of crime detection - such as forensic evidence - interested him little, and he took little care to get it right. Investigating the crime was not an end in itself but a means to another end: 'I was far more interested, and always have been, in the human beings involved and in their interaction with each other', he once remarked. Maigret was to be the touchstone against which these relationships were explored; in fact, Simenon referred to him as the 'rope'. In other words, he was what held it all together, the element that provided the narrative focus for the books.

Nevertheless, much has been made of the 'Maigret is Simenon' theory - an idea Simenon played games with, sometimes seeming to lend it support, other times rejecting it. Perhaps, instead, it is more meaningful to regard their relationship as being symbiotic: certainly, it developed over time. If in the earlier stories Maigret was more of a device, in the later (post 1950s) stories there is greater concentration on him as a character. From the beginning Simenon does seem to have invested in Maigret many qualities drawn out of his own experience and observation of life: he acknow edged, for instance, that his own father's attitude towards people was reflected in Maigret's. It is also possible that, in Maigret, Simenon to some extent created an alter ego whom he could endow with particular attributes. Or perhaps it has to do with the genre, and the nature of the relationship between authors and their detectives: Chandler is reputed to have envied Marlowe his women; perhaps Conan Doyle saw in Holmes what he might have wished to be like, and Dorothy L. Sayers certainly said as much of Lord Peter Wimsey. There is no doubt that, just as with other detectives, Maigret became a rope that entangled his creator. The real key to whatever connection exists between Maigret and Simenon lies not in such facts as they were both pipe-smokers, but in correspondences between their attitudes towards society, in their working practices and in the ambiguity attaching itself to the roles each played out in their respective lives. Maigret can be seen as a sort of cypher for Simenon's creativity. Simenon's preoccupations, activities and, perhaps, aspirations are imaged there, but it is a refracted image, which is perhaps why Maigret's face is never once described.

Maigret was 'born' in 1930 and had a long career (the last book being written in 1972, although Simenon died in 1989), in the course of which his cases took him all over France and as far afield as America. But it is with Paris that we associate him, above all with pre-war Paris and its distinctive atmosphere. The best stories are those that evoke that time and place, because it was what he knew and understood best. The *Bal Anthropometrique*, too, was characteristic of that 1930s Paris that Maigret belonged to; but, even so, he would never have attended such an event. Its ironies would not have escaped him, but it was not for him. Instead, when he left the Quai, it was to head for the peace and comforts of his flat in the Bde Richard-Lenoir. On the way he might have a *calvados* or a beer at the local brasserie, perhaps with one of his men, Lucas or Torrence; but never delaying too long because at home he could put his feet up and have a pipe while Mme Maigret warmed up one of his favourite dinners, perhaps *tripe a la mode Caen*, which she always had ready, waiting for his return. ■

"If it rains, I write, 'It rains': you will not find in my books drops of water that transform themselves into pearls...I want nothing that resembles literature." - Simenon

SUE GRAFTON

I is for interview

Sue Grafton's ninth Kinsey Millhone caper, *I Is For Innocent*, was recently published and work is well underway on the next - *J Is For Judgement*. Jeff Popple spoke to Grafton about plans to kill her ex-husband, crime, Kinsey and what Z will stand for.

Jeff Popple: I am about half-way through *I Is For Innocent* and must say that I am thoroughly enjoying it.
Sue Grafton: Thanks.
JP: Kinsey Millhone is certainly aging well.
SG: Yes. I intend aging her at the rate of one year for every two and a half books. She aged one year over the first six books, but I intend speeding that up. I want her to be around forty when the series finishes with *Z Is For Zero*. I think that it would be a nice age to stop her at.
JP: So there are going to be plenty more Kinsey Millhone books?
SG: Yes. I intend working my way right through the alphabet. I see it as a marathon. Twenty six books instead of twenty six miles. I think it is going to take a lot of psychological work, but I am committed to doing it.
JP: Working on an alphabetical series must impose some restrictions on you. What comes first, the title or the story?
SG: I usually use the title as a jumping off place. In a couple of the books, *C Is For Corpse* and *B Is For Burglar*, I always knew what the title was going to be. With others it came apparent as the story went along. Originally E was going to be For Ever, but I kept thinking 'what does it mean?' When I started F it was going to be for Felony or Forgery, but these seemed pretty boring. When I came up with Fugitive I felt a real spark and the story flowed from there.
JP: What about J?
SG: J is going to be for Judgement.
JP: That's a shame. I had a bet it was going to be for Justice.
SG: We had a contest at a book convention recently and Justice was the popular title amongst those there, although some suggested Jello. I just prefer Judgement.
JP: I have often wondered what X is going to be for.
SG: Xenophobe. It seems to me that a fear of foreigners is a worthy motive for murder.
JP: Have you plans to write any non-Kinsey Millhone books?
SG: No. It usually takes ten months to write a new Kinsey Millhone and then I spend September and October promoting the books and taking a break. So there isn't any time for anything else. I took a break from the series to write something else it would mean that I would take longer to get to Z. If I thought I was bored or burnt out I might take a break. Sometimes I wake

up during the night in a cold sweat at the thought of doing another 16 books. But basically I will keep on going. Kinsey is a very jealous character and I don't think she would like me doing something else before I was finished with her.

JP: There seems to have been some changes in the series over the last two books away from the strict PI format of the eariler books.

SG: Yes. *G is for Gumshoe* was basically my version of the road movie. Kinsey spent a lot of time on the road with Dietz (a fellow PI with whom Kinsey has an affair in the book) and a lot happens outside of Santa Teresa. With *H is for Homicide* I wanted to set it in Los Angeles and take a look at the gang scene there. It deliberately has none of the regular supporting cast of characters in it and is quite different from the books in the series. It has a much faster pace and is more of an adventure story. With *I is for Innocence* I wanted to return to the whodunnit and to keep people guessing to the very end. I intend to keep mixing the books up, for example K will be an adventure story again.

Not all my readers are happy with this swapping between styles. But as every book writes itself I don't have a lot of control over what happens.

JP: Is there one book that is the most popular with your readers?

SG: Probably *A is for Alibi.* It is still making money and is usually the one that readers seem to prefer.

JP: A has what is probably my favourite ending of the series.

SG: Mine too. Sometimes I don't know what the ending is going to be until I get to it, but with A I always had a pretty good idea.

JP: Is it true that the idea for A came out of a scheme you had hatched for killing-off your ex-husband?

SG: Yes. I have been accused of making that up for publicity purposes, but I swear it is true. He put me through three difficult custody battles. I'd lie awake at night, feeling helpless and frustrated. After a while I began to think life would be so much easier if I killed him. I came up with a scheme, but instead of carrying through with it and killing him I put it in a book. So I had the satisfaction of murdering in absentia without any of the worry of going to prison if I was caught.

JP: One of the standard questions I have to ask is how much of Sue Grafton is there in Kinsey Millhone?

SG: Quite a bit. Before writing A I had to research quite a lot of stuff about being a PI and about ballistics, forensic etc. So when it came to the moment of writing the only thing I knew about was being female. So I have tried to make her as close to me as possible. She is in effect a stripped down version of me. She is younger, thinner and braver than me. But we both have the same outlook. I own two of her guns. I look out my window and there is a VW just like hers in my driveway, except that mine has Kinsey Millhone vanity plates. We both jog three miles each morning and we both have a smart mouth.

JP: In the books we get Kinsey's views on a wide range of subjects, but there does not seem to be any attempt to get across serious messages or themes in the way that Sara Paretsky does in her V.I. Warshawski books. Is that intentional?

SG: Yes. I am not a political creature and I don't think that it is the role of mystery writers to preach to their audiences. It is bad enough that politicians are the biggest fiction writers around without mystery writers adding to it. Obviously some of my opinions creep into books, but I do not intentionally set out to bias the reader towards my views.

JP: Is it right to say that over the series Kinsey has maintained a certain disinterest in having lots of money and a distrust of those with money?

SG: I am not quite sure that it is that strong. What I have tried to indicate throughout the series is that Kinsey is a professional woman working to pay her bills. She leads a very stripped down life, but if business falls off it is very easy for her to lose everything. However, Kinsey is more spiritual than material and other characters in the books tend to worry about her and her spartan life.

JP: Do your readers also worry about her?

SG: Many readers identify with her and worry about her. They feel that she eats too much junk food and that she should look after herself better. They are very protective of her and want for her to have a better life. They are also concerned that she has no permanent romance in her life and no pets

"...I don't think that it is the role of mystery writers to preach to their audiences. It is bad enough that politicians are the biggest fiction writers around without mystery writers adding to it."

to look after.

JP: You have avoided those suggestions so far.

SG: I feel that a regular partner and pets would get in the way. Kinsey often has to take off abruptly and the chances are that the reader would become distracted from the main story worrying about whether the cat has been fed or not. Also I think that it would be very off-putting to have Kinsey regularly engage in baby-talk to a cat.

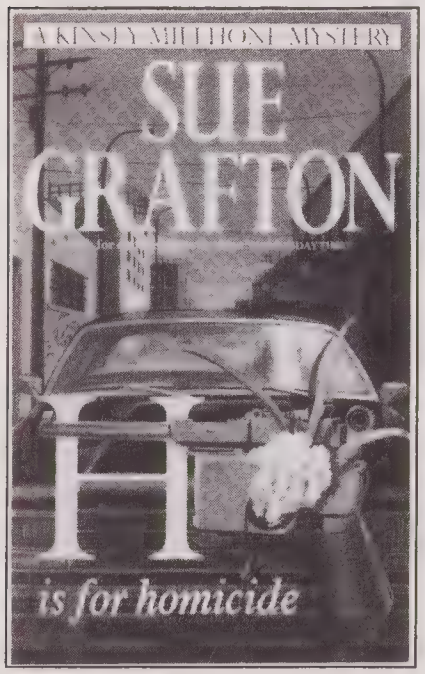
JP: Are there any plans for a Kinsey Millhone movie or television show?

SG: No. I worked in Hollywood for 10 years (as a script writer) and I know what a risky business it is. I originally started the series as a way to get out of Hollywood and have no interest in getting involved again. Once you sell the rights to a character you lose your control over that character and I think I would be very foolish to do that with Kinsey Millhone.

I also think that the reader is the best casting director. Each reader has their own mental vision of what Kinsey Millhone looks like and it would be dangerous to transpose an actress's face over that or to associate a particular actress with the series.

JP: With some popular crime series on television it becomes very hard to separate the actor from the book. For instance whenever I read the Inspector Morse books by Colin Dexter I have a mental image of the actor John Thaw.

SG: That's right. If the actor matches your mental image it is fine, if not it just jars and detracts from your reading pleasure.



"I feel that a regular partner and pets would get in the way. Kinsey often has to take off abruptly and the chances are that the reader would become distracted from the main story worrying about whether the cat has been fed or not."

JP: Do you read much crime fiction?

SG: Yes. Many of my friends are mystery writers and I like to be able to say to them I have just finished reading your latest book. So I usually have a pile of mystery novels beside my bed.

JP: Any favourites.

SG: Tony Hillerman. Elmore Leonard, I love his street dialogue. Dick Francis, in part because he has written 26 books and I admire the way he always manages to weave horses in without it appearing contrived.

JP: When you started writing the Kinsey Millhone books there were only a handful of female PIs, but over recent years there has been a virtual flood of them.

SG: Yes it is just about reaching saturation point. I think some writers tried imitating the female PIs around in order to get published, but I understand that publishers are now becoming tired of female PIs and that it is becoming harder to get published. I do believe though that there will always be room for original talent.

JP: Thank you for the interview and hopefully we will see you in Australia one day.

SG: I would love to visit Australia and do a tour. At the moment I'm planning to visit there in 1994 in our Fall. I am looking forward to it. It should be great. ■

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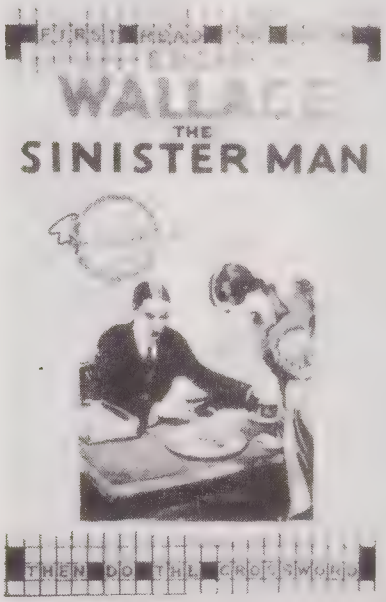

CAPE FEAR

Phil Edwards looks at the original version of *Cape Fear* and the updated remake from director Martin Scorsese. *Cape Fear* is released on video at the beginning of November but Mean Streets has got three to give away in this issue

There was a story going around about *Cape Fear*, that may be true...or not. It seems when producer Steven Spielberg was after Martin Scorsese to direct the remake of *Cape Fear*, Scorsese was less than enthusiastic. DeNiro was already on board, and like Spielberg, wanted the director for the job. As the story goes, DeNiro called Scorsese to try and convince him - in the character of Max Cady!

It was the fact that *Cape Fear* was remake which initially deterred Scorsese from being involved. Besides, Scorsese was already thinking about what he was going to do with *Schindler's List*, another Spielberg project and finishing up work on *Goodfellas*. "I was busy completing work on *Goodfellas*, and people are saying 'Come on lets go' and I say 'No, I'm not ready. I can't do that.' Finally, when it came down to reading the script, I suddenly saw another way of going with it, and thought maybe I could take the challenge," says the director. Whether won over by DeNiro/Cady or not, Scorsese finally agreed. "It was a big challenge," he says of the remake, "to try and blend psychological thriller with an action movie with the kinds of things I like to get my hands on - working with characters and actors." Scorsese, however, was blunt with his producer. "I told them I didn't like the way the script was. I didn't like the family. When I told Spielberg what I had in mind, he said 'You can do anything you want'". Scorsese refers to what he did to the screenplay as 'Catholicising' it!

Made in 1962, *Cape Fear* was something of a cause celebre in its day. Based on a novel called *The Executioners* by John D. MacDonald, it was scripted by James R. Webb who won an Oscar that year for his work on the Cinerama epic, *How the West was Won.*

The *Cape Fear* of 1962, shot in black and white, was one of several films which had been inspired by the success of *Psycho* two years before. For the adaptation, Webb jettisoned much of MacDonald's plot, reducing the Bowden children from three to one in number and adding the sexual threat to both Leigh Bowden and her teenage daughter. For its time, *Cape Fear* was an unusual film in that the character of Cady, played by Robert Mitchum, had no redeeming qualities whatsoever.

It was this aspect, and the story point in which Cady makes it clear he intends to sexually assault the teenage daughter (Lori Nelson from the National Velvet television series) and wife (Polly Bergen) of Sam Bowden (Gregory Peck) which caused the film's censorship

furore. The uproar peaked in England where the censor listed no less than 150 cuts he wanted to make to *Cape Fear*. The film's director, J. Lee Thompson was outraged and went public on the matter, creating headlines in the press. Peck, also producer of the film, was visiting England at the time and after talks with the censor, a shorter version of the film was released there.

While the 1962 version of the film is something of a cult item these days, mostly thanks to Robert Mitchum's study in evil and its cracking last twenty minutes, it's miles apart from Scorsese's state-of-the-art remake.

The screenplay for the new version of *Cape Fear* was written by Wesley Strick, writer of *Arachnaphobia*. Strick had a duel challenge: he had to rework Webb's script and MacDonald's original novel. Interestingly, *The Executioners* had been set totally in a rural area - *Cape Fear* and the houseboat setting of the climax had been Webb's invention.

"At first, Cady was your garden variety sadist," says Strick, "but we wanted to elevate him to a higher level of psychosis. He possesses that most dangerous quality - a certainty of mission which makes him truly relentless. He will never stop." While Mitchum's Cady of 1962 was certainly more than a 'garden variety sadist', Strick added extra spin to the character by having the 1992 version a misguided religious zealot as well. Whether intentional or not, Strick and Scorsese tapped movie history with their reinterpretation, drawing on another famed Mitchum monster, the killer from the 1958 *The Night of the Hunter*.

Scorsese and Strick added further twists to the story. In the original (and the novel) the Bowden family are a happy one - it was their 'good' versus Cady's 'evil' which formed the basis of the film. In the new version Sam Bowden (Nick Nolte) and his wife Leigh (Jessica Lange) are overcoming Sam's philandering past, while their daughter Danielle (Juliette Lewis) is a victim of their dysfunctional relationship. She's at odds with her mother and has taken to smoking marijuana as an escape from her parents bitter bickering.

The whole family, however, will soon be a victim of Cady's vengeance, formed over 14 years he's been in prison. Bowden was Cady's lawyer in a rape/assault case, and he had withheld vital information about the victim which would have gotten Cady off. Cady, apart from discovering fundamentalism and decorating his muscled body with religious symbols and quotations, has been studying law; he knows what Bowden did all those years ago. Comments Strick, "Cady has gotten out of prison, and he sees a very materialistic world. He sees the Bowdens living comfortably. They have never been tested."

Typically reticent, DeNiro has little to say about his characterisation of mad Max Cady. "He's this character that just keeps coming and coming...like a revenge machine...a steamroller. He wanted to get revenge in the worst way, the most insidious way possible. He was going to do a Charles Manson kind of thing. He was going to get at them through their minds. It's not just coming at them like some kind of monster." Initially, Cady starts by simply irritating the Bowdens in ways that aren't illegal. "He just plants himself near them in a movie theatre and laughs too loud," explains Strick. "It's maddening. He does this sort of thing until they are completely on edge."

As with many of Scorsese's films, there's a blackly comedic aspect to *Cape Fear*. "Tension can be funny," the director says. "When all the different options close away, it's almost like some wry, moral game."

Note for video viewers: Martin Scorsese worked in the anamorphic widescreen process for the first time. It's worth noting that, technical perfectionist that he is, he supervised the video mastering of the film, even slightly altering some edit points to gain the most from the scan and pan process. ■

She arrives in Sydney on the train, dragging a large brown suitcase behind her. Fatty and Stretch offer her a lift to Ryde. She accepts. They have one thing on their minds. She has another. Return Ticket is an impressive new fiction from Blue Mountains writer Pauline Smith

Return Ticket

She clambered from the train, hauling a large brown suitcase behind her. It jammed in the narrow doorway and the passengers waiting behind her to disembark began to push and jostle in their impatience. No-one helped. They all had their own burdens. Finally, she heaved hard, gashing the battered leather even more, and the suitcase fell askew against her bare leg. Tears filled her eyes and coursed down her travel-stained cheeks. Her ankle was grazed and bleeding but she had no handkerchief with which to staunch the flow. Inwardly she cursed her weakness, but put it down to reaction. It was always like this, after.

She stood for a few minutes beside the emptying carriage. Flashes of memory made her hands sweat and her stomach cramp in excitement. With determination she blanked it all out, wiped her hands down the side of her dress and bent to pick up her case.

People stared at her as they passed, important with destinations reached. They stared, assessed her at once as trouble and as the shutters fell in their eyes, they strode or clicked or trotted out of her life.

There were no luggage trolleys unclaimed so she was forced to carry her case along the length of the platform. She changed hands frequently and dropped the case when she could carry it no longer.

The ticket collector waiting impatiently for the last stragglers sniggered as she handed him her grubby ticket.

"What have you got in that case? The family jewels?"

She stared at him blankly until he shuffled uncomfortably. As she struggled onto the crowded concourse he muttered "Thick" just loud enough for her to hear.

She stood, apparently confused by the noise and bright lights, uncertain of where to go next. She moved to the left towards the exit, then back again past the deserted ticket barriers. She dumped her case next to a rubbish bin, and sat on it. She pulled a cigarette from the packet stuffed in her misshapen cream cardigan and lit it after striking three matches with a shaking hand. The blood from her grazed leg had dried into dark red crusts and smudged her white plastic sandals.

Two men, almost identically dressed in blue jeans, black t-shirts and faded denim jackets with fierce-looking eagles spread on their backs, leaned idly against the wall of a refreshment stall. Their bodies were still but their eyes roved ceaselessly.

Fatty nudged Stretch with his elbow as his eyes passed over the girl.

"We could 'ave a bit o' fun with that one," he said, nodding at her. He smiled in anticipation, eyes predatory and cold.

Stretch fixed his gaze briefly and twisted his cadaverous face into a grin. "You must be desperate, mate."

"Look at that case. She's probably run away from home. Just ready for our sorta help." Before Stretch could stop him, Fatty was advancing on the girl, face beaming.

She dropped her cigarette on the ground then started as she looked up and saw Fatty and Stretch standing in front of her. It was beginning again. So soon.

"G'day," said Fatty, radiating friendliness and body odour.

"Hello," she muttered.

"You look lost. Me and me mate Stretch thought we might be able to help."

She picked up her case, holding it in front of her body, two hands together on the handles.

"I'm not lost. I'm on holiday."

"Sure," said Fatty, eyeing her unkempt appearance. "Nice time of year for a city holiday."

Stretch snickered, and Fatty continued, "Can we drop ya somewhere?"

She appeared to consider, then asked in a flat voice, "Do you know how to get to Ryde?"

Fatty looked sideways at Stretch. "That's not far. We could give ya a lift if ya like. We haven't got nothing planned for tonight."

"I thought I'd get a bus."

"Nah, they don't go that way."

Her face was worried. "Taxi?"

"Cost ya heaps."

She thought again for a minute, while Fatty held his breath, looked around at the concourse which was much quieter now that the arriving passengers had dispersed, and shrugged. "Why not?"

Fatty motioned to his friend to carry the suitcase. The girl relinquished it quite willingly and the shabby trio walked together into the night. The car, a rusty Kingswood with expired registration stickers obscuring the left side window, was parked untidyly in a back street five minutes walk from the station. Fatty chatted all the time, not giving the girl a chance to notice the occasional bus to Ryde. Stretch opened the boot of the car and threw the case carelessly in.

"Be careful," the girl said sharply.

"What've you got in the bag? Bricks?" Stretch grumbled as he slid behind the wheel.

The girl sat next to him, with Fatty squashing in beside her. She gazed indifferently at the city streets. The driver drove recklessly, screeching around corners and racing red lights when he felt no police were nearby. The car radio sang and squawked unheard. The girl felt Fatty oozing over her.

"Don't do that," she said as his pudgy hand moved up her bare thigh and under the hem of her skimpy cotton dress.

"Come on," he urged, hand moving faster and further. "Loosen up, bitch."

She tried to sit up then lay back as Fatty persisted. "Why not?" she said.

Fatty's breathing rasped in the silence. "Hurry up, mate. Let's get somewhere quiet."

The nine o'clock time signal.

Stretch accelerated, street lamps blurring as he sped along the suburban streets onto the western freeway.

Self-important news theme on the radio.

"God, she's hot!" shouted Fatty.

"Leave some for me," said Stretch, shifting uncomfortably in his seat, distracted by Fatty's excitement and the salty fish smell of the girl next to him.

The newsreader began, voice excited. "Today the naked body of a truck-driver was found..."

The girl moaned loudly and wriggled on the car seat. The radio signal dissolved into static as the car lurched onto a side road then bumped and bucketed down a dirt track. The driver switched off the engine. The radio died. Silence except for Fatty's gasps. The men flung out of the car, Fatty unbuckling the belt on his jeans as he went.

"Come on, kid. Get out." Fatty's face was red and sweating.

The girl pulled out a red tartan rug. Stretch said, "Jesus, what's that?" He bent his thin body towards the case to have a better look then began to back away. "Fatty!" he croaked.

She regarded the two impassively, then said, "I've got a blanket in my case. The ground's pretty hard otherwise."

"Get the case, Stretch," Fatty ordered, jeans already around his knees, fat hairy stomach quivering in the cool air. Stretch lifted the case out and dropped it on the roadside. She knelt down, fished a key from the pocket of her cardigan and unlocked the case.

The lid fell back and hit the ground with a thud. Fatty struggled with his jeans. He began to curse and hop on one foot. "Fuckin' pants. won't go over my boots." Stretch gazed dully at the girl as she sorted through the contents of her case. Clothes. Packets of plastic bags. Boxes and parcels. Everything surprisingly neat and ordered. He made no attempt to get out of his clothes. Fatty always went first. He was resigned to it, in fact rather enjoyed watching old Fat in action.

Fatty pulled one boot off with a grunt of effort.

The girl pulled out a red tartan rug. Stretch said, "Jesus, what's that?" He bent his thin body towards the case to have a better look then began to back away. "Fatty!" he croaked.

Fatty had his back to them, his bare bottom monstrous and white. He turned as quickly as he could, still with one leg of his jeans impeded by the second boot.

The girl was standing holding a gun steadily before her. The barrel pointed at Stretch. "Stay where you are. Both of you." Her voice was totally unlike the previous monotone.

Fatty attempted to bluster. "Come on. Don't be like that. We was only wanting some fun."

The girl smiled wryly. "That's what they all say. But, unfortunately for you, it's me that wants the fun." She saw Fatty's gaze flick towards his friend. Stretch stood frozen. She motioned him. "Get the rope from the case, and tie up your fat friends hands. Make the knots tight." Stretch grabbed the rope and did as she said. His hands shook but a prod with the gun between the shoulder blades reminded him that the girl was serious.

"Now get your gear off," she ordered.

Stretch took his boots off first then scrambled out of his clothes, sobbing in his haste. He stood in front of the girl, trembling, covering his thin ginger pubic hair with his hands. She laughed then squeezed the trigger gently and Stretch jerked backwards. The report echoed around the silent paddocks.

Fatty's face was a dirty grey in the moonlight. He swallowed several times before he could speak. "Someone'll hear you." The girl shook her head. "Rabbit shooting. Anyway, out here people put their heads under the bedclothes if they think there's trouble."

He turned and tried to run but tripped and lay sprawling in the dirt with his head next to the suitcase. He tried to roll over then saw the package in the suitcase. He began to shudder and make mewing noises. The girl stood over him and jabbed the gun between his buttocks.

"You're pathetic. A worm." There was scorn in her voice, but excitement as well. Fatty scrabbled in the dirt, trying to squirm away from her. She lay the gun down carefully where he couldn't see it, slipped off her cardigan although the night was cool, and unzipped the pink cotton dress. When she was naked except for her white pants she picked up the gun again and stalked towards the man on the ground. "Turn over," she ordered.

With a great heave he rolled onto his back. She stood over him, stroking his nipples and belly with the sight piece of the rifle. He moaned and great globules of sweat rolled from his body. The girl squatted closer until she sat on his body. She rubbed herself on his crutch although he tried to pull away from her in horror.

"Get off me. You're sick." His voice shook.

She only pressed against him harder. "It's the power," she said, moving all the time. "I have the power." Her head whipped from side to side and she clutched the gun so tightly Fatty thought it would go off. He tried to buck her off his body but her legs gripped him like wires. His frantic efforts excited the girl further and she grunted and sighed then stopped moving. The gun pointed at Fatty's chin.

"Don't hurt me," he begged. "I won't tell anyone about Stretch." She could smell the fear. "I won't hurt you," she said and her eyes shone. "I like you." Still holding the gun, she bent over and kissed Fatty's mouth. He tried not to pull away. She said, "But I'm going to kill you." And she smiled kindly.

She stood, stretched voluptuously and motioned with the gun for him to get up fron the dirt. He struggled to his knees and then to his feet. He began to shuffle backwards, dragging the jeans in the dirt.

"You're fuckin' mad," he said.

"You may be right. But if this is madness I like it. I get off on killing. You'll be the third this trip," she called as he began to run backwards. "What a pity I can't keep you," she added as she raised the gun. "You'd make a rewarding pet."

Fatty's eyes registered surprise as the bullet tore into his chest, and his body hit the ground hard.

The girl walked over to the suitcase. She fished a cigarette from her cardigan and lit it. "God, I'm tired." She sat, still naked, on the rug and drew the smoke into her lungs greedily. "And I'm not finished yet!"

He turned and tried to run but tripped and lay sprawling in the dirt with his head next to the suitcase. He tried to roll over then saw the package in the suitcase. He began to shudder and make mewing noises. The girl stood over him and jabbed the gun between his buttocks.

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The next morning around dawn a local man exercising his string of greyhounds found two naked male bodies arranged neatly on a red tartan rug. Next to them, neatly packaged in plastic wrap were other human remains. A large flat foot. An arm from the elbow down with a half a snake tatooed on it. Neither Stetch nor Fatty was easy for the police to identify. Like the truckdriver found the day before beside the southern highway each body had a neat bullet hole through the heart, and each body was headless.

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At the station a neatly groomed girl in a navy blue suit sat primly in her train staring out the window at the platform and the groups of passengers farewelling their friends and families. An old lady fluttered along the aisle, checking seat numbers against her ticket. She subsided next to the girl, dumping her packages on the floor.

"Hello, dear," she said to the girl. "Could you put my parcels up on the rack for me? I can't reach."

The girl placed the bags next to her own battered brown case.

"Have you been visiting the city, dear?"

"Yes," the girl smiled as she opened the paperback novel on her knees. "I've been on holiday. Just a flying visit," and she thought, I've got some lovely souvenirs. She had been tempted to keep the tattoed arm as well, but wanted them all to know the same person had been responsible for all her hits. Three a day. She lay back in her seat, heavy wth satisfaction. As the train whistle blew for departure, she laughed out loud as her gaze rested reflectively on the old brown case. The old lady looked at her and the girl said, "I had such a good time I think I'll take another break soon. Maybe head north and enjoy the sun." ■

WHIPPING BOY
By Gabrielle Lord
(McPhee Gribble, 339 pages, large format pb, $19.95)
Reviewed by Robert Hood

Without a doubt, Gabrielle Lord's *Whipping Boy* is a superlative thriller. The issues have gotten very serious here, not to mention tragic, and genuinely disturbing. As most people would realise by now - many enthusiastic reviews of the book having already appeared - *Whipping Boy* is about child pornography and the pederasts who are both the producers and consumers of the suffering that arises from organised child abuse. Okay, these issues have become inordinately 'popular', if not trendy, as a theme in both crime and mainstream fiction; but Lord has done her homework and the essential horror of the thing, apart from natural aversion, is the conviction readers must feel that the sorts of crimes Lord is describing are really happening - in Australia, now. I for one, though conscious of the prevalence of child abuse in our society, hadn't realised that the sort of organised exploitation described in *Whipping Boy* was also here. I had vaguely imagined it was still a largely American phenomenon, as portrayed by New York lawyer and crime writer Andrew Vachss.

But *Whipping Boy* is fiction and, though by its nature it promotes awareness of that particular social evil, it is a good novel, precisely because it is not propaganda, but a powerful thriller with a deeply humanistic approach. Lawyer Cass Meredith has been appointed to head an inquiry into child pornography in Australia and the novel details her investigations into this particularly nasty area of criminal activity. A video in which a street kid dies while being sexually abused by a coterie of highly-placed pederasts is put into circulation by a prostitute, Loveday Larsen - and the consequences of this and Cass's own probings prove increasingly dangerous for both Cass and her eight-year-old son Mozzie, as they become the target of threats, muggings and, eventually kidnapping. Mixed up with this is Cass' doubts about her own team - in particular ex-vice squad detective John Carrigan, whom she increasingly suspects of being corrupt and even involved in the child abuse business himself - and her guilt-ridden relationship with her own son. Career motives clash with love and family responsibility, self-doubt and a tendency to moralistically jump to conclusions create confusion for her, and Cass finds herself struggling not just with social evil, but her own past.

Beautifully written, with engaging and believable characters sensitively drawn, *Whipping Boy* is an exceptional thriller. Its subject matter is painful and disturbing, but the book is never tasteless or exploitative; nor does Lord shallowly moralise about the pederasts. These 'monsters' are more than that; and there is a breadth of vision, and a compassion, that allows the pederasts some humanity. They are damaged and disturbed men, some more vicious than others, and though she despises what they do, Lord does not simply rail against them.

As a thriller, *Whipping Boy* is riveting. Lord's slow unravelling of her characters' inner lives powerfully engages the readers' emotional involvement, so that the danger seems significant and our fear for Cass and Mozzie makes the tension, once it starts to build, unrelenting. To my mind, the novel loses some of its power once it becomes more conventionally thriller-like, towards the end, but this change in the quality of reader response is little more than a quibble. Nor did the fact that I was sure of the identity of the central villain long before it was revealed (smarter than me Robert!! - SC) spoil things for me; it just didn't matter. There was too much else going on for this anticipated revelation to weaken the climax. All told, *Whipping Boy* is a major contribution to the crime thriller genre in Australia, and an excellent novel by any standards.

I IS FOR INNOCENT
By Sue Grafton
(Macmillan, 286 pages, hardback, $32.95)
Reviewed by Jeff Popple

I Is For Innocent represents a change for Sue Grafton and her spirited PI Kinsey Millhone.

At the end of Grafton's last novel, *H Is For Homicide*, Millhone had severed her comfortable, long standing working relationship with California Fidelity Insurance and was forced to look for new office accommodation.

I opens with Kinsey teamed up with a firm of lawyers, Kingman and Ives: "*As with California Fidelity, I was not*

REVIEWS

an employee. I worked as an independent contractor, providing professional services and billing accordingly. To celebrate the new arrangements, I went out and bought myself a handsome tweed blazer to wear with my usual jeans and turtleneck."

The new arrangement also brings with it a new case when the firm's usual investigator drops dead of a heart attack requiring Millhone to take over a pre-trial investigation. The case is a civil matter, a suit for wrongful death, filed to recover damages from a man, David Barney, who has been tried and acquitted for the murder of his rich wife. Friends and relatives of the victim are convinced that Barney killed her, and frustrated by the failure of the prosecution to prove it 'beyond reasonable doubt', have turned to the civil court to seek re-address.

At first the case against Barney seems clear cut, but as Millhone digs deeper the case for the prosecution seems weaker. As Millhone's doubts increase she is faced with the question: If Barney did not kill his wife who did?

Millhone's dogged investigation dominates *I* and as a result it moves at a more subdued pace than the earlier books. Millhone herself is also more subdued and less self assured as she tries hard to make a good impression on her new employers. It is interesting to see Milhone reflective and a bit off balance for once and it contrasts nicely with the freewheeling style of her last outing. When it counts, however, Millhone still shows a dogged determination to get at the truth:

"'Curtis, have you ever been convicted of perjury?'

'Perjury?'

'Goddam it! You know what perjury is. Just answer the question and let's get on with this.'

He scratched his chin, his gaze not quite meeting mine.

'I've never been convicted'.

'Oh, hell', I said."

Sue Grafton has said that she wanted to return to the whodunnit for *I* and as a result the emphasis is much more on the plot and the unravelling of what really happened. The various strands of the plot are gradually disentangled and there are a number of neat surprises unveiled before the unexpected ending. Along the way Grafton also painlessly imparts some interesting information on forensics and legal procedure. If the early parts of the book lack action and excitement the final pages make up for it and the climax to *I* is one of the most exciting that Grafton has written.

I represents an interesting change in pace and direction for Grafton and offers more intellectual stimulation than her last two books, while still being a very good read. It is highly recommended.

NO WAY BACK
By John Carroll
(Pan, 244 pages, paperback, $10.95)
Reviewed by Robert Hood

Question: what makes a novel about criminal investigation a 'crime thriller'? Answer: sex and violence. If you like your crime fiction sexy and violent, John Carroll's *No Way Back* is the one for you. The main character, Gatz, is not a PI; he is a cop whose gruff attitude and forthright aggression push him towards suspension and isolation. Life's not great for Gatz; he is being investigated over his use of excessive force (which results in the demise of a petty crim during an undercover operation aimed at capturing the killer of a string of derelicts), his wife has left him for her lesbian lover and everyone is after his hide, including his superiors, several lawyers and a vengeful hoodlum.

Meanwhile Gatz continues his investigations into a particularly messy murder. Luckily, at least for his love life, Karen, the sister of a missing witness, proves to be sexually athletic, insatiable and attracted to him. Their relationship develops, resulting in an almost completely gratuitous, but energetic and detailed, sexual encounter which lasts for something like 20 pages. This is definitely love as lust. Steamy it is, not to mention soggy, and bound to be offensive to someone, somewhere. Well done though (the writing, that is). From there the novel speeds toward the violent nexus of its several threads, leaving the reader somewhat breathless.

No Way Back is a strong book - and I'm not confusing 'strength' with the simple presence of sex and violence. They have something to do with it, of course. Gatz is macho and appallingly 'male'; but it is an effective portrait and, if the cops in the novel express attitudes that are insensitive to gender issues, that's not entirely unexpected. The opposite might be desirable, but hardly realistic, given the circumstances. And the mere depiction of fairly aggressive sexual encounters shouldn't brand the book 'sexist'. I didn't find Carroll's women mere 'objects', and, though I suspect others will disagree, such disapproval too isn't unexpected.

Meanwhile the book is what it is, and if that means its audience will be primarily male, so what? I can see no reason why female readers who don't mind violence in their crime fiction should object, and the others can ignore it. It's competently written, effectively structured (though I have reservations regarding the prominence of the sexual interlude, in terms of wordage), and not insensitive to the dilemmas of being human. The bad guys provide some interesting portraits, there are good minor personalities, and Gatz himself is able to evoke a degree of understanding, if not actual sympathy. His troubles are convincingly portrayed and recognisably human, even allowing for those larger-than-life qualities that are another aspect of what makes the book a 'thriller'.

DEATH AT VICTORIA DOCK
By Kerry Greenwood
(McPhee Gribble, 186 pages, paperback, $11.95)
Reviewed by Robert Hood

More sexually active than even the most profligate of recent male PI's (though not evoking the same feminist disdain) is Kerry Greenwood's Phryne Fisher, 1920s Melbourne detective and the hero of the four previous Greenwood novels. *Death At Victoria Dock* finds Phryne surrounded by communists, radicals and spiritualists, while she searches for the killer of a 'beautiful young man' whose body Phryne stumbles upon just after the windscreen of her beloved Hispania-Souza is shot out as she drives home from the opera. As you can imagine, these events do not impress her and she braves all sorts of discouragements in her attempts to right the wrongs and bring the killers to task. When Dot, her maid, is kidnapped, the fat is really in the fire.

Death At Victoria Dock is, like the previous Phryne novels, lush and well-mannered (provided you're not offend-

ed by Phryne's sexual activities and penchant for beautiful young men) - and the plotting is somewhat more substantial than in some of its predecessors. The novel's period view of Melbourne and sections of its society is interesting and evocative, displaying a feel for the time and place which comes from strong imaginative involvement. Greenwood is completely relaxed in her handling of Phryne herself. The Hon. Phryne Fisher comes over as strong and humane; she and her Melbourne are likely to be - and remain - the novel's main attractions, along with its exquisite sense of detail.

THE JAPANESE JOB
By Peter Corris
(Angus & Robertson - Blacklist, 203 pages, paperback, $10.95)
Reviewed by David Kibble

One of the main virtues of Peter Corris, as a writer, has been consistency; over the last decade or so he has churned out dozens of novels of uniform and quite reasonable quality. Indeed his most recent Cliff Hardy novel *Beware Of The Dog* is among his best. And, to be fair this latest 'Crawley' offering, *The Japanese Job*, works despite not being up to his usual standard. Perhaps the pressure of juggling three series, and if reports are correct, contemplating a fourth, has resulted in quantity at the expense of quality.

Set in Australia's deep north after Fitzgerald and Wayne Goss swept the Nationals from power, *The Japanese Job* is built on the notion of corruption, and its energy sources: greed and the lust for power - sexual, economic and political - by the white shoe brigade, Japanese developers, and the Federal Security Agency (FSA) bureaucrats.

We are introduced, by way of a prologue, to the Loyal Alliance, an anti-republican group dedicated to the overthrow of the Goss government, but who seem to be a front for a more sinister group of xenophobic nationalists - "The Diggers". Its membership is typical of the Queensland National Party and its supporters: corrupt, greedy, arch-conservative, RSL orientated nationalists. Some sort of 'demonstration' is planned.

The story proper begins with FSA fieldman Ray (Creepy) Crawley's arrival in Brisbane to investigate the murder of wealthy Japanese business man Ohira Yasuhiro, head of Yasuhiro Corporation and the fifth richest man in the world.

Encased in concrete then speared through the heart with a steel reinforcing rod, he is, it seems a victim of The Diggers.

As is Corris's habit, and great strength, things begin to happen at a fast and furious pace. Geoff Legge, the brother of the local FSA man, Ross Legge, is a member of The Diggers, and was probably involved in Yashurio's murder. He is killed, as is brother Ross. Crawley starts sniffing, discovers the beautiful and mysterious Mary Kurosawa, employee of the Yasuhiro Corporation, whom he makes love to, ostentatiously using a condom,

"Crawley unrolled the condom and

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let it sit, soggily, in the palm of his hand. 'Not the most romantic part of the business,' he said.

'More romantic than babies or AIDS.'" (p78)

(Who said Corris doesn't have a sense of social responsibility?)

A perpetual source of embarrassment, Crawley is ordered back to Canberra. Always the rebel he digs in his heels and refuses to give up his investigation into the murders. To add insult to injury Crawley calls in his old (now retired) partner Huck and between them they start to unravel The Diggers.

Derek Jacka and Dougie Cooper, a couple of macho-ocker nuts who got their jollies in Vietnam are identified as members of The Diggers, as is Bert Luck the puppeteer who pulls their strings. They discover that Ms Jacka is having it off with Luck, behind her insanely jealous husband's back. Except for some supporting characters, the cast is complete.

As the plot gathers pace Corris has four groups chasing each other around Brisbane. There are the Japanese, who are becoming increasingly sinister as Mary reveals more about Yasuhiro Corporation and its criminal ambitions. The Diggers are after Crawley, and the jealous Jacka is after the 'rich man' he suspects is having an affair with Mrs Jacka. Crawley and Huck are after The Diggers. The (official) FSA is after Crawley - who it fears will wreck commercial arrangements with the Japanese.

It is here that Corris displays his greatest strengths - he juggles a complicated plot with certainty, he maintains a pace that never flags, and does it with a verisimilitude that makes the whole thing credible. His geographical and political settings are spot on.

As the novel progresses Corris draws the four groups together until in a bloody shoot-out on the scrubby block that houses Jacka's caravan, a resolution is reached - not really a satisfactory one for the moral purist, but doubtless satisfactory enough for someone with Crawley's moral elasticity.

If you're a Corris fan you'll enjoy *The Japanese Job*, but you will probably be more critical of it than you have been of other Corris thrillers. The characters, even Crawley himself, are not as well drawn as we have come to expect. Some of the bit players are convincing - especially Derek Jacka, others are not. The almost mandatory love affair between Crawley and Mary is cliched. Corris' prose is not as crisp as usual and he makes fundamental mistakes for a writer by telling rather than showing,

"'Long-term I'm for Australia,' Crawley said." (p6)

But all that said, *The Japanese Job* is a good read, and once you get into it you'll not want to put it down until the echo of the final shot has faded.

SET UP
By Peter Corris
(Pan, 201 pages, paperback, $10.95)
Reviewed by Robert Hood

In this novel, Corris introduces Luke Dunlop, an ex-cop whose manufactured identity reflects his job as a wit-

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ness protection officer - that is, he helps important informers to construct new lives in order that they might avoid the consequences of becoming a 'dog'. Dunlop, whose personal life isn't in great shape, is assigned the task of guiding informer Kerry Loew into a new life and keeping him safe from the vengeful criminal underworld. But there are some unexpected glitches.

While in prison Loew married TV personality Cassie May, and turned 'dog' primarily so that he could be with her. That's fine, and nicely romantic, except that Cassie May isn't all that keen on the idea (it was a matter of expedience and effective PR at the time), and besides, having met her, Dunlop finds dedication to the integrity of his job difficult to hold on to. As the vacuum of his own 'false' life fills with passion for the aerobic Cassie May, Dunlop's dilemma suddenly forces him to re-evaluate his priorities and sets him up to become the very thing he is supposed to protect Loew from.

Set Up drags the reader inexorably towards its violent climax - tightly controlled, well-realised and dramatically resonant. Dunlop's character is distinct, serviceable and sympathetic, and the other personae, especially Loew, are drawn well enough to give the novel considerable emotional backbone. Though normally approaching the writing of a novel with considerable alacrity, Corris has this time exceeded his own personal best: the story goes that *Set Up* was written in 22 days, from conception to manuscript. If, hearing that, you expect the novel to show signs of carelessness, you can think again. Corris' writing is tight and evocative, and the plot developed with an economical use of dramatically effective detail, and with compelling build-up. In short, it is as trim, taut and terrific a piece of popular fiction as you would expect from a master like Corris, and in some ways given a sharper focus because of the tight deadline pressures under which it was written.

TO MAKE A KILLING
By Jean Bedford
(Angus & Robertson - Blacklist, 176 pages, paperback, $10.95)
Reviewed by Robert Hood

Last year, mainstream fiction writer Jean Bedford entered the crime stakes with *Worse Than Death*, the first 'mystery' featuring Anna Southwood, Sydney PI. Anna returns with To *Make A Killing*, now investigating an 'accidental' death on the south coast of NSW. More 'mystery' than Corris' thrillers - a whodunnit with a PI overlay - *To Make A Killing* is an effective piece of writing, tracing an investigation that leads back to emotions and crimes hidden for 40 years. Murder and business interests both play into the title's pun.

As one would expect from Bedford, the writing is competent and evocative; the characterisation, both of the people involved and the south coast setting, sensitive and finely-tuned; and the emotions underpinning the plot the strongest part of the novel. The mystery aspect, with its concentration on investigative dialogue, predominates over action. It is overseen by Anna, the Sydney PI, who is slightly out of her depth far from the big city, but handles things well enough, not through the use of fists or guns, but through dogged determination, intelligence and empathic sensibilities. The plot is well crafted, on the whole less self-conscious than that of the first Anna Southwood book; Anna, and Bedford, have relaxed into the form, both discovering with increasing confidence just what it is they do well in terms of the PI milieu. No doubt they will go from strength to strength as further novels in the series appear.

WHITE COLLAR
By Richard Cassidy
(Pan, 235 pages, paperback, $10.95)
Reviewed by Robert Hood

Statistics tell us that a growing area of criminal activity is white-collar crime and Richard Cassidy has entered that arena with *White Collar*. Though its hero, Frank Moth, is described as 'not your standard threadbare private detective', the novel is in fact a fairly standard PI tale, not threadbare by any means, but hardly very innovative either. Moth, who wears eighteen hundred dollar suits, mightn't sport a trench coat, or even a leather jacket, but he does have a gun, and he uses it.

We are told that the success of Moth's agency lies in the fact that he specialises in white-collar crime. Indeed he has a partner who is a computer whizz, merrily hacking into various networks after information and seeking economic anomalies that will lead to the exposure of the guilty. Yet while Moth utilises sophisticated bugging devices, he doesn't like computers. And crucial aspects of the plot, for all the novel's technological genfecting, are standard PI fare: a death that might be murder, double-dealing of various kinds, wisecracks, unsympathetic cops, blackmail, threats, beatings, a killer who's something of a psychopath, shootings, suicide, corruption at high levels...that sort of thing. It's well structured, readable, and can be nasty when necessary, with plenty of action, good dialogue and an easy pace. No worries, this is a competent piece of work. I just couldn't help feeling that the title was something of a misnomer and the emphasis of the blurb misleading. Even the sophisticated Moth acts like his 'blue-collar' progenitors when pushed and turns from a yuppie into a hardboiled egg with a gun. Maybe that's the point: even the whitest collar gets grubby when it spends any time working the mean streets of the PI genre.

A RED DEATH
By Walter Mosley
(Serpents Tail, 284 pages, paperback, $18.95)
Reviewed by Robert Hood

In 1991, Walter Mosley's *Devil In A Blue Dress* won the John Creasey Award for a First Crime Novel; now the protagonist of that nook, Easy Rawlins, is back in *A Red Death*. Set in the 1950s in LA, *A Red Death* is a lively, readable tale, noir in style and subject matter, but reader-friendly and humanistic. The sense of black culture which pervades it is one of its strongest appeals. It is written in a distinctive voice, a working-class negroid dialect which seems accurate (though I couldn't, of course, vouch for its authenticity). At any rate the writing is tight and unaffected, conveying a sense of time and place with considerable conviction, and presenting a black perspective without polemic bitterness or racial anger.

Easy is a likeable character. He works as a cleaner in his own tenements, paying himself a wage and keeping his ownership of the building

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quiet partly to avoid unpleasant official questions regarding where he got the money to buy them, and partly because becoming an owner would be likely to alienate him from his working-class roots. However, the IRS catches up with him, in the form of Agent Lawrence, who brings the force of white tax law down upon his head. Easy is saved by an FBI operative, Special Agent Caxton, who will arrange for Easy to avoid prison if he will infiltrate a local church organisation, gathering information on a suspected communist agitator among the black community.

Easy has a black man's fear of biased white law and in desperation agrees to this plan - but the decision creates moral dilemmas of various kinds and threatens to destroy his already fragile self-image. When one of his tenants suicides, under threat of eviction for non-payment of rent, and the local pastor is murdered, apparently because of Easy's undercover role, the dilemma gets steadily worse. Finding he has fallen in love with his best friend's wife - and that friend is a psychopathic killer - is simply the icing on the cake.

There is much that is admirable in this novel. Its scenes of human interaction, personal and communal, and its depiction of black-white relations, is deeply insightful and morally strong.

NEW AND NOTED

Recent crime fiction sent to *Mean Streets* and available from Ausralian book shops. These titles are not reviewed critically. Plot synopses come from book jackets and press release information and are intended merely as a guide to what's new.

INTERNATIONAL HARDBACKS

OTHER PEOPLE'S BLOOD
By Frank Kippax
(Harper Collins, 207 pages, $32.95)

To people on the edge of urban war, bloodshed and violence can come to seem irrelevant, a dull and sombre bass-note to their day-to-day existence. The reality of soldiers, bomb-craters, blood - the knowledge of atrocity - become almost banal. Jessica Roberts and Rory Collins, when they meet on the shores of Lough Swilly one early summer's day, certainly have other things to preoccupy them than the bloody and unfolding story of their native land. They are young, attractive, well-to-do, and Jessica has a kind of wild vivacity that cannot be denied. They are going to fall in love, and the fact that she is a Protestant and he is a Catholic means nothing to them. Such things, they know, are simply not a problem in their world. But they are wrong. Jessica's father Samuel is a powerful business figure in the Province, while Rory's - now dead - had the romantic reputation of involvement with another 'cause'. Worse, Jessica is soon to be engaged to a shadowy Englishman called Martin Parr. Without them ever really knowing why - but with appalling speed - their certainties crumble in bigotry and violence.

THE KINKY FRIEDMAN CRIME CLUB
By Kinky Friedman
(Faber and Faber, 468 pages, $35)

Contains The Kinksters first three novels - *A Case Of Lone Star, Greenwich Killing Time*, and *When The Cat's Away*. *A Case Of Lone Star* is set in New York's celebrated Lone Star Cafe where, in Kinky's own words, 'sequined singers start dying with their hand-tooled boots on and the lyrics to a Hank Williams song in their hands.' *Greenwich Killing Time* is a journey into the dark heart of Manhattan. The scene of the crime is Greenwich Village. The corpse is found holding eleven pink roses. The suspects are as strange as the crime. In *When The Cat's Away*, a purloined feline from Madison Square Garden's cat show is the tip-off to a trail of murders, drug rings and gang wars - a trail that only Kinky can follow.

CLOCKERS
By Richard Price
(Bloomsbury, 599 pages, $32.95)

Rocco Klein, a veteran homicide detective in a city just outside Manhattan, has lost his appetite for the wild drama of the street. When a warm June night brings yet another drug murder, Rocco has no sense that the case is anything special. A black twenty-year-old steps forward to confess, but then a little digging reveals that he's never been in any kind of trouble, whereas his half-brother runs a crew of street-corner cocaine dealers - clockers - in a nearby housing project. Soon Rocco's hunger for the job is back. Highly recommended.

BUCKET NUT
By Liza Cody
(Chatto & Windus, 236 pages, $37.95)

Liza Cody introduces Eva Wylie. Eva is big. She has a mean streak, large pectorals and a wicked tongue. She wants to be the Women's Heavyweight Wrestling Champion of Great Britain. In the ring she fights as the London Lassassin, but to the fans, who think she has a face like a bucket, she is simply 'Bucket Nut'. Eva is a hustler with a talent for trouble. When she is not trying to make it on the wrestling circuit, she works as a security guard in a breaker's yard, with only two dogs as big and mean as herself for company. She also does odd jobs for anyone who will pay her - the sort of people she should be wary of. But Eva is not a woman who asks the right questions even when she crosses paths with private eye Anna Lee (making a guest appearance here). Instead she blindly pursues her own goals and then wonders why she has so many enemies. An unorthodox heroine, Eva cuts a swathe through London low-life, unencumbered by bank account, telephone, driving licence or scruples.

BRING ME CHILDREN
By David Martin
(Headline, 310 pages, approx $30)

From the author of the magnificent *Lie To Me*. "Quinndell is a monster. That's not a figure of speech Mr Lyon - he's a monster." John Lyon is tempted to ignore the distraught woman who accosts him in the street with wild tales of murdered children and a doctor of death. He's got enough

problems as it is, having just experienced an emotional breakdown on national network television. But when the woman commits a bizarre act of self-destruction in his presence, Lyon's sympathy and his dormant instincts as a journalist are aroused. He moves into a remote cabin in rural West Virginia to investigate her claims. What he finds there leads him to doubt his sanity...and nearly costs him his life. His nerves already jangling from the isolation, and from a harrowing encounter with a weird, gnomelike man and his ferocious dog, Lyon is sent over the edge when he finds a white box in the cabin and, in that box, the body of a beautifully exotic woman. In a matter of days, Lyon finds himself entangled in a deadly web of evil. At its centre is Mason Quinndell: a monster of sadistic ingenuity, a physician whose mission to heal has been hideously perverted, a creature whose depraved games of torture know no limits. Chillingly violent, perversely erotic, it is also a fascinating exploration of betrayal, the nature of evil and the redeeming power of love.

MAMA'S BOY
By Charles King
(Harper Collins, 411 pages, $32.95)

While the Harrow family were all down on the floor in front of the linen closet, whooping and laughing, the man who had come to kill them was just getting off a plane at the local airport. He was a CIA assassin turned mass murderer, a grandmaster of deception who arranged his bloody orgies to look like the work of the family's father - right down to the suicide note. But tonight he would make two mistakes: slay the family of the brother of a reckless and inventive New York cop named Jake Harrow; and overlook a wide-eyed witness to his slaughter - a little West Indian boy named Winston Churchill. Convinced his brother could never have murdered his wife and children, the wise-cracking white cop teams up with a traumatised black boy to track down the real killer. Together Jake and Winston stalk their enemy in a deadly duel of trap and counter-trap. Finally - wounded, betrayed, wanted by the police, marked for death - they flee in an ancient Cadillac over the blue highways of the American Midwest to the scenes of Jake's childhood, where he finds the key to the killer's identity, and his own.

ALL AROUND THE TOWN
By Mary Higgins Clark
(Random House, 302 pages, $29.95)

Laurie Kenyon, a student at Drew University has an obsession: her English professor, Allan Grant, a married man. When he is found stabbed to death, Laurie's fingerprints abound - on the door, his desk, the knife. Charged with murder, a shocked and bewildered Laurie has no memory of the crime. Traumatised by abuse she suffered after she was kidnapped at the age of four and held for two years, she has developed multiple personalities. Laurie does not know that other personalities exist within her, nor is she

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aware that one of them has been sending Allan Grant crazed love letters and secretly entering his home. Laurie's older sister Sarah, gives up her job as an assistant prosecutor to defend her. Sarah believes the key to Laurie's innocence lies in investigating exactly what happened during her two years of hell by unlocking the suppressed memories of those lost years. Bic Hawkins, a fundamentalist preacher, and his wife Opal, Laurie's abductors, are now prominent television evangelists. Before releasing her, Bic had threatened the six-year-old Laurie with death if she talked - a threat he may now have to carry out. Bic's obsession with Laurie has never diminished; and now it is rivalled by his fear of exposure. He is compelled both to be close to her and to eliminate her forever. If one of Laurie's personalities perpetrated the crime, is she to be held responsible for Allan Grant's murder? Will the truth about Laurie's abduction surface? And if so will she survive it?

BODILY HARM
By Rachel Billington
(Macmillan, 339 pages, $32.95)

On a bright summer's day in West London, an attractive, healthy young woman is viciously stabbed by a stranger and left for dead. Her attacker - Lydia will think of him as her murderer - is sent to prison. Lydia's body heals slowly, leaving thin white scars, while her mind's repair takes longer. Pat is brutalised by his prison experiences, described with appalling clarity, rejects love wherever it is offered and is subject to violent mood swings. Lydia and Pat tell their stories alternately, relating their separate struggles in worlds that seem far apart. But each life has been indelibly stamped with the life of the other, which gives the novel a chilling sense of foreboding. The novel explores the strong link between victim and aggressor which offers the chance for both final violence and healing love. It traces the line between rational and irrational behaviour.

SOMETHING LIKE A LOVE AFFAIR
By Julian Symons
(Macmillan, 179 pages, $32.95

Judith Lassiter has an attractive architect husband, Victor, who sends roses on their wedding anniversary. They live in a smart house, designed by him, and have no financial worries. So why does Judith feel she's just going through the motions of living, and why does she write herself imaginary love letters? Her friend Debbie recommends an affair 'to take you out of yourself'. When Judith takes a refresher driving course with a young man named Billy Gay, something like a love affair is exactly what happens. Then she makes a discovery about Victor that appals her, and comes to a decision about what she must do. This is a story about pleasant daydreams turning into violent realities. And like the shadow cast across it is the body found lying in the ditch in the place known as Lovers' Lane.

FATAL FEVER
By C.F. Roe
(Headline, 281 pages, $34.95)

A Doctor Jean Montrose Whodunnit. 'Love thy neighbour' is the divine commandment, but there is certainly not much love lost among the various parishioners of the West Kirk in Perth, where Dr Jean Montrose is a member of the congregation. Bobby Sutherland and Jeremy McIver are in hot competition for the coveted place of chorister in the Scottish Youth Choir - though Bobby seems to have more on his mind than anxiety alone would warrant - and their respective mothers are taking the rivalry to most un-Christian lengths. Bobby's mother, Sheila, is in the grip of illicit emotions, while her husband, an anaesthetist at the local hospital, is running perilously close to accusations of malpractice. Church organist Ian Farquar carries the burden of a past tragedy - and a burning desire to see it revenged; even the minister himself is wrestling with inner demons. Despite these tensions, the close-knit community is appalled at the bizarre and callous murder of one of their number, particularly as it takes place on hallowed ground. Inspector Douglas Niven pinpoints his prime suspect straightaway, and his hunch seems to be confirmed by local gossip. But Jean Montrose, the 'wee doc' who has proved so useful in past cases, has other ideas. Although she has her hands fully occupied with her lively family, and with the flu epidemic that sweeps like wildfire through her patients, Jean makes time to conduct her own investigations. Once again, it is her medical expertise and her shrewd knowledge of the human heart that lead to the murderer.

THE KEY TO THE CASE
By Roger Ormerod
(Constable Crime, 203 pages, $35.00)

Richard Patton, an ex-Detective Inspector enjoying early retirement, is never slow to help anyone with legal problems, and if necessary ignore their past dubious reputations. So, when two men approach him on separate occasions and concerning different situations he is soon deeply entangled with both. It is only when his wife, Amelia, becomes emotionally involved that he has to venture beyond the bounds of legality. Ronnie Cope claims his innocence relating to a burglary, but when Richard uncovers his alibi it turns out to involve another burglary. Milo Dettinger wants his son's suicide proved to be murder, but the only possible suspect is himself. The two incidents become inextricably related, and the connecting theme is the rape and murder of a young woman, Ruby Carter. This is what involves Amelia, since her own daughter was raped and killed, and it is her emotional understanding that forces the revelation of the critical truth. Only then can Richard see the true facts behind Bryan Dettinger's death, and at last turn the key to Ruby Carter's.

INTERNATIONAL PAPERBACKS

THE SHAPE OF DREAD
By Marcia Muller
(The Women's Press, 218 pages, $16.95)

A Sharon McCone mystery. McCone. Private Eye. Strong, clear-headed, intuitive, just. In search of truth and a decent bowl of chilli, she intrepidly investigates downtown San Fransisco crime. Now she is called in to reopen a two-year-old 'no-body' murder - the murder of a rising comic

actress. The trail is long cold, and a black youth faces the death penalty. But when McCone discovers the remains of a corpse, it turns out to be just the first of a series of sickening and horrifying relations.

TRIAL
By Clifford Irving
(Signet, 404 pages, $11.95)

They called it suppression of evidence and disbared him from the 299th District Court for two long years. His instincts had proved him wrong - wrong enough to put his career and his marriage on ice. Criminal defense lawyer Warren Blackburn came back from the wilderness to pick up the crumbs - and found two cases just like the one that brought him down. But this time he was ready to back his judgement and fight. Fight for justice and a fair trial against a legal system that would do anything as long as it got a deal.

THE BONE ORCHARD
By Joseph Trigoboff
(Bloomsbury, 276 pages, $16.95)

The young man was beautiful - and dead. In life, Sean Maysfield was a gorgeous male stripper and an ultra-popular hustler. In death, he was the first of the boys to be found savagely slain. It is homicide detective Alvin Yablonsky's job to sort through all the dirty laundry of even the nicest people's lives and uncover all the nasty things they sometimes do to satisfy perverse lusts. But now he is obliged to put his usual cases on hold as he hunts the calculating killer who is turning New York's sexual underground into a cemetery.

CHEROKEE
By Jean Echenoz
(Faber and Faber, 212 pages, $13.95)

Described by England's *The Times* as "A razor-sharp Parisian thriller which shares the spaced-out features of the wackier French films of recent years." Paris Match said: "Worthy of the great film noirs, a literary novel that reads like a detective story." *Cherokee* recounts the adventures of George Chave, the proverbial innocent who, in his pursuit of love and the mysterious Jenny Weltman, manages to run foul of the police, a cult that worships the Sister-In-Law and a remarkably loquacious parrot.

BACKHAND
By Liza Cody
(Arrow, 279 pages, $9.95)

An Anna Lee mystery. She is now merely a saleswoman of burglar alarms with no gaps in her diary for any surprises. Until, that is, she meets an American client, Lara Crowther, for a game of tennis. Lara employs Anna to trace some missing knitwear - and then the missing daughter of its designer. The tangled skein has loose ends both sides of the Atlantic and Anna, glad to leave the muddle of her own life in London, finds herself in Florida, playing a dangerous game whose rules she does not know, and where, under the glitter and the suntans, evil intent flourishes.

59 AND RAINING
By Barry Gifford
(Paladin, 124 pages, $12.95)

The sequel to *Wild At Heart.* Whatever happened to Perdita Durango? The high priestess of bad behaviour and even worse luck is back. Still killer-lovely and haunting the darkest corners of the American landscape, she has teamed up with handsome, deranged bordertown dealer Romeo Dolorosa. Together they wreak havoc across Texas, Louisiana, Mexico and Los Angeles, running drugs, posing as devout believers while conducting *extremely* unholy rituals, and kidnapping college kids just for the fun of it. On their trail is an unruly pack of law enforcement officers from various departments who seem forever one step behind.

THE BENT HOSTAGE
By Martin Charles
(Bloomsbury, 212 pages, $16.95)

Even in Central America you can insure against the kidnapping of senior executives. The premiums are high, and awkward questions have to be answered. But if you can spare an executive, the rewards are huge. Herb Lopwitz, corporate lawyer of Sanitex Inc., can spare any number of executives. In particular, losing John Clark 111, son of the chairman, has a certain rightness to it. Engineer a kidnap in the Dominican Republic, and bingo! $25,000. No problem - once the contributions of comically named revolutionary movements, venal police chiefs, hard-as-nails anchorwomen, straight-as-a-die insurance men and confused terrorism experts have been taken into account.

SHADE
By Emily Devenport
(The Women's Press, 246 pages, $16.95)

Shade: an orphan on the violent, slick and scurried streets. Shade: a fighter for survival. Shade: whose mind-reading capacity gets her out of deadtown alleys and into the monied world...where her talents bring her trouble. Under the thumb of the evil and powerful gang-leader, Chaz, she is forced to use her abilities to gamble at the daily pit-fights. But when a group of young prostitutes is murdered, Shade finally decides to stop being used and to start demanding justice.

MAMA'S BOY
By Charles King
(Fontana, 508 pages, $11.95)

Paperback edition of book noted in International Hardbacks. Cover jacket features impressive blurbs from Peter Straub, and Andrew Klavan, author of *Don't Say A Word.*

KING SOLOMON'S CARPET
By Barbara Vine
(Viking, 356 pages, $11.95)

Jarvis lives in a crumbling house with a belltower, overlooking the Jubilee line. He loves the tube with all its secrets - its hidden tunnels, its mysterious 'ghost' stations, its spectacular incidents and frightening accidents. The house was once a school, but now Jarvis lets out rooms. People gather here from the tube: there is Tom, the lost Busker, and Jed, who keeps a hawk and uses the trains in the night hours; Jasper and the truant boys riding terrifying high above the tracks; and Alice, who wants to forget the baby she has deserted. Then there is the mysterious Alex, riding around on the tube he so hates, formulating his terrible plan. As this group of people is brought together, the diverse strands of their lives are woven into a story in which the chillingly unusual and the seemingly ordinary combine to create a tale of disconcerting perplexity and sinister charge. As most of our readers know Barbara Vine is actually Ruth Rendell.

REVIEWS

STALKER
By Liza Cody
(Arrow, 201 pages, $9.95)

An Anna Lee mystery. The search for Edward Marshall, a missing furniture dealer, is routine until Anna (a Private Investigator at Brierly Securities) embarks on painstaking enquiries that uncover him as a fraud, poacher, conman and lecher - yet seemingly a man without a shadow. The trail leads the dogged Anna out of London and to a gruesome discovery on Exmoor. But exactly whose is the grinning skeleton with a crossbow bolt between its ribs? Why are the Metropolitan Police so slow to make a positive identification? Why is Edward's unhelpful wife so ill at ease with her mysterious minders? And while Anna is stalking a murderer, who has her in their deadly sights?

DEATH OF A PARTNER
By Janet Neel
(Penguin, 252 pages, $11.95)

His relationship with wilful girlfriend Francesca on the rocks, a harassed Detective Chief Inspector John McLeish is assigned to the case of missing Angela Morgan. An attractive, wealthy lobbyist, and fiancee to a high-ranking government minister, Angela courted success - and the envy of her detractors. When her badly decomposed body is found a week later, the shock waves ripple through Whitehall, and only the murderer knows why. Temporarily distracted by Sergeant Catherine Crane, the newest addition to the team and a stunning blonde who adds her own delicate touch to the case, McLeish gradually uncovers a labyrinthian network of lies, jealousy, fraud and revenge.

PACIFIC BEAT
By T. Jefferson Parker
(Harper Collins, 372 pages, $19.95)

From the author of the acclaimed *Laguna Heat* and *Little Saigon*. On a May night near Newport Beach in California's Orange County the discovery of the body of a woman, raped and brutally murdered, sets off the kind of manhunt the police and their families dread: the victim is one of their own - and so, it appears, is her killer. Ann Weir Cruz, found floating in the bay with purple roses bound to her body, was eight weeks pregnant - with a child she and her police-lieutenant husband Ray Cruz desperately wanted. The only clue to the outrage seems worse than no lead at all: a police car was spotted driving away from the scene of the murder. The delicate undercover investigation falls to Ann's brother, Jim Weir, now a professional diver, who must expose the secrets of the police department he left only a few years before. But Jim's determined pursuit of his sister's tormentor soon becomes an agonising race, for Ray Cruz, his best friend and ex-partner, desperately wants to find the killer first. Against a backdrop of corrupt city politics, Jim penetrates private allegiances and family secrets - until the unexpected and heartbreaking truth emerges.

BODY OF TRUTH
By David Lindsey
(Warner Books, 417 pages, $24.95)

When Lena Muller, daughter of a wealthy Houston businessman, disappears in Guatemala her father hires private detective Jim Fossler to investigate. Six months later Houston homicide detective Stuart Haydon receives an urgent phone call from his old friend Fossler - from Guatemala City. Fossler has finally found Lena, but believes she is in serious trouble. Sounding shaken, he asks Haydon to fly down to help. Arriving in Guatemala, Haydon is immediately drawn into the country's strangely sureal, violent netherworld, where a small coterie of American expatriates are deeply involved with the country's corrupt military - and with an elusive faction of Guatemalan guerillas. As Haydon becomes caught in this web of intrigue, he soon learns that Lena Muller is not the young woman either he or her parents thought her to be. And that in Guatemala, people are not the only things to disappear: the border between reality and illusion often vanishes as well.

THE HEAT'S ON
By Chester Himes
(Allison & Busby, 174 pages, $10.95)

From the start nothing goes right for ace black detectives Coffin Ed Johnson and Grave Digger Jones. Grave Digger is shot and his death announced in a hoax radio bulletin; they are disciplined for use of excessive force; and the bodies continue to pile up faster than Coffin Ed and Grave Digger can run. Yet, try as they might, they always seem to be one hot step behind the cause of all the mayhem - a simple albino called Pinky and $3 million-worth of heroin.

FINISHING TOUCH
By Betty Rowlands
(Coronet Books, 253 pages, $11.95)

A Melissa Craig detective novel. This woman simply had to be her next victim! Working out how to kill her would have to come later, Melissa Craig thought vengefully. Just as soon as she was able to get back to writing the well-overdue next thriller. Meanwhile the woman twittered away, with her silly prejudices and utter insensitivity to the fact that there had been a real murder. A girl was dead. Someone Melissa had first seen mutilated in effigy. A knife plunged into her portrait and sliced viciously downward from throat to stomach while the Art College Award Show audience gasped with horror at such aesthetic vandalism. But this time the knife had cut into flesh, not canvas. Flesh and blood. And someone Melissa had grown rather fond of was the prime suspect.

THE WAY SOME PEOPLE DIE
By Ross Macdonald
(Allison & Busby, 195 pages, $10.95)

A Lew Archer novel originally published in 1951. 'Who are you working for, Archer?' That is the trouble with this case; Archer has more clients than he knows what to do with. The first is a worried lady in Santa Monica who wants him to find her daughter. Then a very nasty mobster offers him more money to find the same girl. But the third client won't be needing Archer any longer - he is lying in the hallways with a bullet in his neck.

DEVIL IN A BLUE DRESS
By Walter Mosley
(Pan, 219 pages, $10.95)

A cheaper, but less impressive looking (than the Mask Noir version) edition of one of the best crime fiction debuts of recent years. The summer of '48 in the City of Angels and there's heat on the streets and in the ghettos of LA when Daphne Monet hits the sidewalk. Heat when she disappears with a trunkload of someone else's cash. "I'm just asking you to find a

girl..." A simple decision for Easy Rawlins - no job, a mortgage and money due. Simple but for one thing. Nobody ever warned him - better the devil you know...

A RED DEATH
By Walter Mosley
(Serpent's Tail - Mask Noir, 284 pages, $18.95)

Devil was good - *Red Death* is better. When an income tax officer makes him an offer he can't refuse, Easy Rawlins is forced out of retirement and into the infiltration of his neighbourhood church, the First African Baptist, and the surveillance of local radicals. Murder strikes and Easy becomes the prime suspect of the Los Angeles Police Department, who lose no sleep over the fate of 'free-lance' private eyes.

THE WYCHERLY WOMAN
By Ross Macdonald
(Allison & Busby, 259 pages, $10.95)

A Lew Archer novel originally published in 1961. Lew is far from home and suitable for framing. A Southern Californian named Whycherly has hired him to find his daughter. And in San Fransisco, Lew follows the dark-eyed girl's trail straight to her mother, Wycherly's blonde and boozy ex-wife. Then people start dying, and before he can make sense of anything, both mother and daughter are missing. Somewhere in a foggy maze of murder, misplaced passion and blackmail, Lew has to find the Wycherly woman who's dead and the one who's still alive.

NAOMI'S ROOM
By Jonathan Aycliffe
(Grafton, 207 pages, $8.95)

A horror/ghost story. Charles and Laura are a young and very happily married couple, surrounded by the comforting world of academia. Their life is calm, some might say privileged, and it is made near perfect by their exquisite daughter Naomi. Brimming with excitement and warm with the glow of festive cheer, Charles sets off with his daughter Naomi on a Christmas Eve shopping trip to London. But, by the end of the day, all Charles and his wife have left are cups of tea and police sympathy. Noami, their angelic child, has disappeared, snatched away into the bustling crowds. They hope and pray for her return. And she does. But not how they would ever have imagined.

THE ADVERTISING MURDERS
By Julian Symons
(Pan Crime, 403 pages, $11.95)

Two acclaimed novels - *The Thirtyfirst of February* (first published in 1950) and *A Man Called Jones* (first published in 1947), both set in the cut-throat world of advertising, where business always takes precedence over scruples.

GONE AWAY
By Hazel Holt
(Pan Crime,192 pages,$10.95)

A Sheila Malory mystery. Attractive Lee Montgomery does not fit readily into the small West Country town where she runs her estate agency. There is something about her that makes other women uneasy. When she disappears suddenly, her fiance, a successful businessman, asks his old friend, Sheila Malory, to keep her eyes and ears open for any information. But Sheila, possessed of an inquiring mind and sharp deductive powers, finds that beneath the tranquil routine of her seaside home an undercurrent of duplicity runs dangerously deep.

LOW MEAN MEN
By Rowland Morgan
(Bloomsbury, 212 pages, $16.95

Well, we didn't think much at all of Rowland's last novel, *Tall Dead Wives*, but the word is that this is better! Cody Wallace is an architect, but you'd never know it to look at him. He's been on one of those year-end benders that can get you kicked out of *Gentleman's Quarterly*. His wife Peppi is a movie actress, and she's hot, and she's gone AWOL. Cody figures it's New Year's and her place is beside him. Reska DeWoers, big-time film director and big-time lesbian, has other ideas. Her production is in trouble and she reckons she needs Peppi even more than Cody does. When Cody busts into her Bel Air eyrie he blunders into a tense sexual drama involving strip poker, fetishism, controlled substances - and another game altogether, played for the very highest stakes, in which Peppi is a mere chip. By the time Cody's caught up with her he's been treated like garbage: shot at, chased from LA to the Napa Valley to Palm Springs to Mexico. And what are those Cubans up to?

POSTMORTEM
By Patricia D. Cornwell
(Warners, 293 pages, approx. $12)

Introducing Dr Kay Scarpetta. A serial killer is on the loose in Richmond, Virginia. Three women have died, brutalised and strangled in their own bedrooms. There is no pattern: the killer appears to strike at random - but always early on Saturday mornings. So when Dr Kay Scarpetta, Chief Medical Examiner, is awakened at 2.33 am, she knows the news is bad: there is a fourth victim. And she fears now for those that will follow unless she can dig up new forensic evidence to aid the police. But not everyone is pleased to see a woman in this powerful job. Someone may even want to ruin her career and reputation.

ALL THAT REMAINS
By Patricia D. Cornwell
(Little Brown, 373 pages, $18.95)

A killer is stalking young lovers. Taking their lives...and leaving just one tantalising clue. When the bodies of young courting couples start turning up in remote woodland areas, Dr Kay Scarpetta's task as Chief Medical Examiner is made more difficult by the effects of the elements. Eight times she must write that the cause of death is undetermined. But when the latest girl to go missing turns out to be the daughter of one of the most powerful women in America, Kay finds herself the focus of political pressure and press harassment. As she starts to investigate, she finds that vital evidence is being withheld from her - or even faked. And all the time a cunning, sadistic killer is still at large.

BODY OF EVIDENCE
By Patricia D. Cornwell
(Macdonald, 387 pages, $18.95)

Someone is stalking Beryl Madison. Someone who spies on her and makes threatening, obscene phone calls to this reclusive author. Terrified, Beryl flees to Key West - but eventually she must return to her Richmond home. The very night she arrives, Beryl inexplicably invites her killer in. This begins for Chief Medical Examiner Dr Kay Scarpetta the investi-

gation of a crime that is as convoluted as it is bizarre. Why would Beryl open the door to someone who brutally slashed and then nearly decapitated her? Did she know her killer? Adding to the intrigue is Beryl's enigmatic relationship with a prize-winning author and the disappearance of her manuscript. As Scarpetta retraces Beryl's footsteps, an investigation that begins in a laboratory with microscopes and lasers leads her deep into a nightmare that soon becomes her own.

SONS OF THE MORNING
By Jack Curtis
(Corgi, 480 pages, $10.95)

Linda Bowman was the first. Nobody special, just a face in the crowd. Yet someone picked her out, someone with a high-velocity rifle, someone elated by his own dark power. Then there was the man on the train; then the young couple drinking at a riverside pub. It was every policeman's nightmare - a clever and remorseless killer choosing his victims at random. Robin Culley is a policeman, and it's his nightmare, but his instinct tells him that, despite what they seem, the killings have a motive. Culley's obsession with the apparently pointless slaughter leads him into worlds of fear and shadow; from corrupt politicians and policemen to the world of assassins for hire and mercenaries on the run; from a sinister and ruthless art collector to the dangerous secrets of a financial elite. It threatens those closest to Culley; and it takes him, finally, to a heart-stopping confrontation with a psychotic killer on the storm-torn wilderness of Dartmoor.

SACRIFICE
By Andrew Vachss
(Pan, 282 pages, $10.95)

Deep in the savage heart of New York City outlaw private eye Burke stumbles across a new kind of cruelty. The shattered mind of an eight-year-old child, the helpless victim of an evil voodoo cult. Programmed by fear to undertake the ritual slaughter of other children. Burke's investigations sweep him into a bizarrely terrifying world of urban voodoo and organised violence - yet one vital step closer to bringing the real killers to justice. But if you can't make the real law do the work for you, there's always the other law. The law that Burke knows best...the law which is never written down...

VICTORIES
By George V. Higgins
(Sphere, 345 pages, $11.95)

Henry Biggs, ex-baseball star, is still something of a celebrity in rural Vermont. He also has ambiguous political ambitions which Ed Cobb, Speaker of the House, encourages him to fulfill. But just in case Henry needs a little more than encouragement to run for Congress (and, given the opposition, he will) Ed has a nice little line in blackmail hidden up his sleeve. So Henry goes for it. At best it will be a welcome escape from his disastrous family life and at worst...who knows? Henry doesn't, that's for sure.

ASK FOR ME TOMORROW
By Margaret Miller
(Allison & Busby, 176 pages, $10.95)

A Tom Aragon novel originally published in 1976 and with a brief introduction written in 1985. Her first husband was rich, fat - and ran off with a fifteen-year-old Mexican maid. The second had a near fatal-stroke on honeymoon in St Tropez. Whichever way you look at it, Gilda Decker hasn't had much luck with men. So when husband number one writes to her asking for money, she hires lawyer Tom Aragon - young, Hispanic and on the way up - to find out why. But when Aragon travels to Mexico, he finds the past shrouded in mystery, and as he approaches his elusive quarry, people start dying, one by one.

THERE'S SOMETHING IN A SUNDAY
By Marcia Muller
(The Women's Press, 213 pages, $16.95)

Sharon McCone. Private Eye. Independent, tough, practical, philosophical. Driving her red MG, wielding an ancient Nik-kormat camera and a .38 hand gun, she boldly strides where angels fear to tread. Investigating for her co-operative law firm, McCone takes on a routine weekend surveillance as a favour for a colleague's client. The job seems straightforward - even boring - until she returns with her report to find the client bludgeoned to death. And Sharon McCone is in the midst of a lethal mix of sour relationships and murderous rage.

THE WYCHFORD MURDERS
By Paula Gosling
(Pan Crime, 251 pages, $10.95)

Noted a few issues back but getting a new push from Pan. The gruesome murder of Beryl Tomkins brings detective Chief Inspector Luke Abbott of the Regional Crime Squad back to Wychford, the sleepy little West Country village where he was born and raised. But Wychford has changed over the last 20 years. Behind the picture postcard prettiness, Abbott discovers a community hiding secret loves and hates; jealousy and greed. And with passions this strong who knows where the next murder will strike?

BACKLASH
By Paula Gosling
(Pan Crime, 160 pages, $10.95)

Republication of a novel noted in a past *Mean Streets*. Detective Lietenant Jack Stryker has been put on a case with frightening results for cops. And when a federal investigator appears on the killer's hit list, the simple answers seem to be disappearing way too fast. What really links these homicides? Can the police department computer make any connections that stick. Stryker, aided by attractive Agent Dana Marchant, is tracking a marksman with an uncanny criminal brain, and a ruthlessly persistent purpose.

MERMAID
By Margaret Miller
(Allison & Busby, 205 pages, $10.95)

A Tom Aragon Mystery originally published in 1982. Cleo Jasper is 22, beautiful, rich and mentally disturbed. And she has gone missing. Her special school, Holbrook Hall, has not seen her. Shortly before her disappearance, she had called at the office of young Hispanic lawyer Tom Aragon. She wanted to know her rights. And so her brother, Hilton, hires Aragon to track Cleo down and bring her home. In a trailer park, far removed from the kind of place Cleo is used to, Tom Aragon finds her closest friend, a counsellor at Holbrook Hall - dead. But no sign of Cleo. She is as elusive as a mermaid, and the hunt takes on a new urgency.

DEATH PENALTIES
By Paula Gosling
(Pan Crime, 261 pages, $10.95)

Sergeant Tim Nightingale, eager to prove himself a credit to the CID, decides to reopen the file on Roger Leland's fatal car crash. Who wanted him dead? Was he the *intended* victim? As quickly as Leland's widow, Tess, begins to put her life back together, someone seems determined to take it to pieces again. Her son Max, taken ill at boarding school, suffers recurring nightmares about his father's accident. Now Tess fears for his safety - as well as her own.

AUSTRALIAN PAPERBACKS

THE MISPLACED CORPSE
By A.E. Martin
(Wakefield Crime Classics, 207 pages, $12.95)

As featured in *Mean Streets 6*. A.E. Martin was born in Adelaide in 1885 and died in Sydney in 1955. He owned a weekly newspaper when aged 18, then worked for many years as an entrepreneur and publicist in theatres, circuses, the movies and vaudeville. Many of the characters in his crime fiction draw on his experiences in early Australian show-business, but he always said that private investigator Rosie Bosanky came straight from his imagination.

Nineteen, red-headed and hard-boiled, Rosie Bosanky is Australia's original female private eye, and appears in this twisted tale of murder, lust, greed and a misplaced corpse.

THE WHISPERING WALL
By Patricia Carlon
(Wakefield Crime Classics, 205 pages, $12.95)

Patricia Carlon was born in Wagga Wagga in 1927 and lives in Sydney. Her crime fiction and thrillers have been widely published in England and Europe and translated into several languages. *The Whispering Wall* has never been published in Australia before its release as one of the Wakefield Crime Classics. 'You'd better get used to corpses, Val' - the wall hummed with the brutality of that assured voice - 'if we're going to turn your stepfather into one.' Laid out like a fish on a slab, Sarah listens as the walls whisper their deadly plans. The house is full of watchers; even the furniture has malevolent eyes. The nurse watches over Sarah, Roses watches out for Sarah, Gwenyth watches the house, the Phippses spy and plot.

LIGNY'S LAKE
By S.H. Courtier
(Wakefield Crime Classics, 176 pages, $12.95)

First published in 1971. Author Sidney Hobson Courtier was born in Kangaroo Flat, Victoria, in 1904 and died in 1974. He worked for most of his life as a school teacher and principal in country Victoria and Melbourne. He was a keen traveller and explorer, and his 26 crime novels are all set around Australia. They were mostly first published in London; some also appeared in American and German editions. In Courtier's bibliomystery, *Ligny's Lake*, the action takes place in Melbourne, Canberra, Bateman's Bay, country Victoria and Bass Strait. A dead man alive at Melbourne's Festival Hall...a merino-shaped lake...a stolen copy of Thoreau's Walden...ASIO's wall of silence. Sandy Carmichael can pick up the pieces, but to fit the jigsaw together, he needs to risk his life. Ligny's Lake is a thriller that weirdly echoes the disappearance of Prime Minister Harold Holt. It is published for the first time in Australia by Wakefield in their Crime Classics series.

BEAT NOT THE BONES
By Charlotte Jay
(Wakefield Crime Classics, 228 pages, $12.95)

Charlotte Jay was born in 1919 in Adelaide, where she operates an oriental art dealing business and continues to write. Her mystery and suspense novels reflect a life spent travelling and her desire to 'frighten and mystify readers by asking them to identify themselves with a character battling for survival in a lonely, claustrophobia situation.' She worked during 1949 for the Australian administration in Papua New Guinea, where she set *Beat Not The Bones*. 'People changed; they were no longer recognisable as Australians. Frustrations and misfortunes festered into wounds here, deranged the mind and poisoned the blood.' Suicide, or murder? In Papua, even the luscious vegetation conspires with the bureaucrats to bewilder Stella. Only deep in the jungle, where the vad men live, can she get to the heart of the mystery. *Beat Not The Bones* won the first Edgar Allan Poe award of the Mystery Writers' Association of America. (Raymond Chandler's *The Long Goodbye* won the second.) Charlotte Jay has revised her thriller for its release in Wakefield Crime Classics, its first publication by an Australian company.

AUSTRALIAN TRUE CRIME

THE VAMPIRE KILLER
By Ron Hicks
(Bantam True Crime, 343 pages, paperback, $12.95)

Subtitled 'A Journey Into The Mind Of Tracey Wigginton'. When police found the body of Edward Baldock by the shores of the Brisbane River, he had been so savagely murdered his head was nearly severed. And there were strange marks on his neck. There seemed no reason for the horrific crime, but as they searched the scene the police found a bank keycard tucked neatly in the victim's shoe. The card was soon identified as belonging to Tracey Avril Wigginton. In one of the most sensational and bizarre cases in Australia's criminal history, Tracey Whittington's three female companions that night told the police that Baldock was killed 'to feed Tracey's blood-lust' because she was a 'vampire'. Was Tracey Wigginton the first vampire for over 300 years? Or was there a deeper, darker reason for her crime? Why was it that during police interviews it was clear that one part of Tracey knew what had happened but another didn't?

GRANNY KILLER: THE STORY OF JOHN GLOVER
By Les Kennedy and Mark Whittaker
(Angus & Robertson, 242 pages, paperback, $14.95)

The second Granny Killer book with a third promised for later in the year. What drives a person to become a serial killer? Why would someone

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assault helpless elderly women? And how could five murders go unsolved? Granny Killer answers these questions. It is the story of Sydney's most notorious mass murderer. Kennedy and Whittaker have traced the life of John Glover, uncovering his unstable childhood and his delinquent teen years to reveal the early signs of his perverse and violent nature. In-depth interviews with Glover's brother, childhood friends, ex-lovers and his current girlfriend depict a man of glaring contradictions - on the one hand a seemingly gentle family man, on the other a crazed and terrifying murderer. In an exclusive interview conducted in prison, Glover (now serving a life sentence in Sydney's Long Bay Jail) candidly reveals what was going through his mind as he stalked his victims.

INTERNATIONAL TRUE CRIME

THE SCOTLAND YARD FILES
By Paul Begg and Keith Skinner
(Headline, 306 pages, hardback, $45.00)

Subtitled '150 Years Of The C.I.D. 1942 - 1992'. 150 years ago, amid considerable public suspicion, a tiny squad of six plain-clothes detectives was set up at Scotland Yard. From this grew the formidable Criminal Investigation Department, renowned through out the world for its unparalleled skill and experience in catching criminals. The famous newspaper headline, 'SCOTLAND YARD CALLED IN', still evokes all the pride and excitement of a crack team of detectives tackling the most notorious and baffling crimes. Working with the full support of Scotland Yard, the authors present the first history of the C.I.D to appear for half a century. The book scans the history of the C.I.D from the first Great Train Robbery in 1855 to Jack the Ripper; Crippen to the Kray Twins; the Siege of Sidney Streets to the Iranian Embassy Siege. It also chronicles the scandals which have periodically rocked the force, from the Great Scotland Yard Scandal, of of which the C.I.D was born, to the Porn Inquiry.

CRIME ON TAPE

KICKBACK
By Garry Disher
Read by Denis Moore
(ABC Audio Tapes, 2 X C90, $19.95)

Wyatt robs banks and lifts payrolls. Most men like him are dead or in jail. But Wyatt stamps a cold, pitiless style on his heists - he makes sure that he never gets caught. Now his funds are low and his luck is running out - until the day Anna Reid explains about the kickback in her partner's safe. Other players are involved: Bauer - who learnt his trade shooting blacks in Southern Africa; Ivan Younger, a small time boss; Sugarfoot Younger, a sullen urban cowboy. In the world of *Kickback* there is no yielding, no redemption. When Wyatt is crossed, the outcome is inevitable. Denis Moore's narration captures the brooding atmosphere of this compelling look into Melbourne's underworld, to its gripping conclusion.

MURDER ON THE BALLARAT TRAIN
By Kerry Greenwood
Read by Melita Jurisic
(ABC Audio Tapes, 2 X C90, $19.95)

When Phryne Fisher, the 1920s' most glamorous detective, arranges to go to Ballarat for the week, she eschews the excitement of her red Hispano-Suiza racing car for the sedate journey by train. But as the passengers sleep they are poisoned by chloroform gas. Phryne is left to piece together the clues; an old woman's bruised and battered body; a young girl who has lost her memory; and rumours of white slavery. Then there is the rowing team of delicious young men, who at first seem to be no more than a pleasant diversion. Melita Jurisic gives an entertaining performance as the smart, sensual and inordinately clever Phryne Fisher.

DEATH IN STORE
By Jennifer Rowe
Read by Jane Clifton
(ABC Audio Tapes, 2 X C90, $19.95)

Christmas at Fredericks department store is a grand tradition. This year once again the carols are playing, the fairy lights are shining and the Fredericks Santa Claus is reigning in his Grotto. The decorations at Fredericks are more stunning this Christmas than ever before. No expense has been spared to create the Fredericks Christmas magic. But this year among the staff at the big store goodwill to all men is noticeable lacking as Verity Birdwood, researcher turned amateur sleuth, is soon to discover. For beneath professional smiles lie thoughts of murder. And for someone, this Christmas will be their last. Jane Clifton captures the essence of the 'Birdie' character in her reading of these entertaining, clever and very listenable short stories.

CRITICAL

BLOODY MURDER
By Julian Symons
(Papermac, 296 pages, paperback, price not supplied)

When it first appeared in 1972 *Bloody Murder* was greeted as the classic study of crime fiction - a book 'heartily recommended to anyone who has ever enjoyed a detective story or a crime novel', wrote Kingsley Amis. A revised version, bringing the story of crime fiction up to date, appeared in 1985. This new edition contains a long postscript which, besides dealing with the most recent work of British writers, including the latest novel by P.D. James and books written by Ruth Rendell as Barbara Vine, considers American trends in crime-writing over the past decade. These are represented by writers such as James Ellroy and Thomas Harris who, Symons says, enjoy the violence about which they write and want to rub our noses in blood and dirt. Umberto Eco's *The Name Of The Rose* and other books like Paul Auster's *New York Trilogy*, which treat the crime story as a metaphysical joke, also come in for sharp comment.

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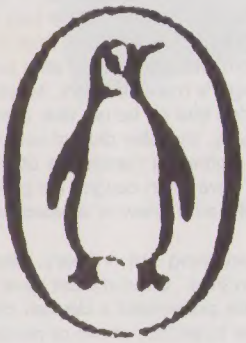

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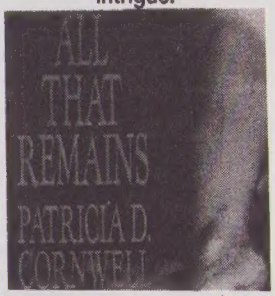

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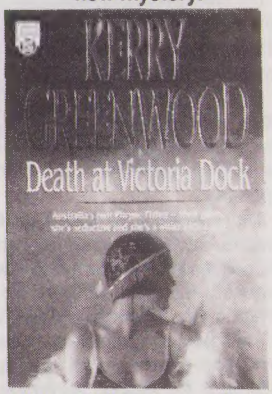

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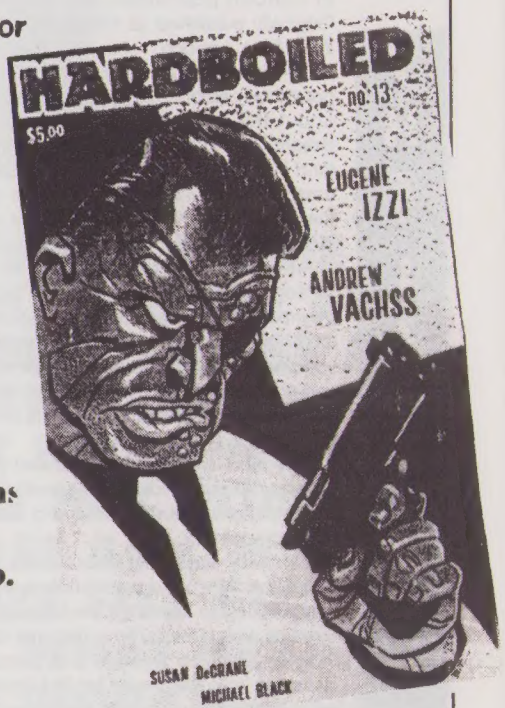

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JACK THE RIPPER

After more than 100 years we are no closer to knowing the real identity of Jack The Ripper. Stephen Wright looks at the theories.

As Sir Melville Macnaghten, Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department, indicates in his now famous Notes, in 1894, the Whitechapel murderer had five victims and five victims only:

(1) August 31, 1888. Mary Ann Nichols - at Buck's Row - who was found with her throat cut and with (slight) stomach mutilation.

(2) September 8, 1888. Annie Chapman - Hanbury Street - her throat was cut, her stomach and private parts badly mutilated, and some of her entrails placed around her neck.

(3 & 4) September 30, 1888. Elizabeth Stride - Berner Street: throat cut, but nothing in the shape of mutilation attempted. *And on the same date* Catherine Eddowes - Mitre Square - throat cut, and very bad mutilation, both of face and stomach. (This is known as the 'double event.')

(5) November 9, 1888. Mary Jane (who called herself 'Marie Jeannette') Kelly - 13 Miller's Court - throat cut and the whole of the body mutilated in the most ghastly manner.

All of these women - prostitutes and alcoholics - had walked the meanest streets of late nineteenth century London, seeking to earn a few shillings for drink and a night's shelter in a flophouse.

The suspects for their murders have ranged from working class persons - labourers, butchers, and the like - midwifes, soldiers, sailors, and policemen - doctors and lawyers - and finally, to Queen Victoria's grandson, the Duke of Clarence. Only the imagination of the writer or commentator forcing some pet theory on the innocent public has limited the kinds and numbers of suspects. The body of their writings are sometimes referred to as "the Ripper industry."

In *Jack the Ripper: Summing Up and Verdict* by Colin Wilson and Robin Odell (Corgi Books: Transworld Publishers, London and Moorebank, NSW, Australia), this became readily apparent from some of the chapter titles themselves: Doctor Ripper, Jill the Ripper, Gentleman Jack, Royal Jack, Black Jack, and Jack of All Trades.

I have consulted this book mainly in the preparation of this article. My secondary source was *Jack the Ripper: The Complete Casebook* by Donald Rumbelow, another excellent study of the subject by a City of London policeman (Berkley Books, New York). Originally published as *The Complete Jack the Ripper* by W.H. Allen, London.

THE LAST WORD

The Wilson-Odell book runs to almost 400 pages in the paperback edition. Nothing apparently has been left out about the various unfortunate ladies - with graphic descriptions but few photos of their horrible mutilation - (and including an additional five 'borderline' Ripper victims), the many suspects, and the official and unofficial theorists. If you read only one book on the gruesome but ever-fascinating crimes, I recommend this one.

In spite on my sincere praise and admiration for Mr. Wilson as a true-crime writer, I believe that this book might have been judiciously pruned to perhaps half its length and its pace and quality made even better. Unless you are what is known as a "Ripperologist," I do not think you should have to wade through all those pages to find out the essential facts and players of the year 1888 in the drama in London's East End.

The facts are these: a number of prostitutes were murdered and mutilated in this poverty stricken area in little more than two months time and almost certainly by the same perpetrator.

What do we know about Jack the Ripper himself? Virtually nothing; and then too there were very few clues. It is interesting to learn that the Victorians did not recognise them as sex crimes. They could not conceive of this serial killer for what he was - a sick psychopath who got his kicks not from the sexual act but from cutting up as much as possible his victims. In fact, in only one case, the last one, was there the possibility of intercourse, according to a suppressed autopsy report. By the way, Mary Jane Kelly was the only young woman - aged 25 - among the five - and she was three months pregnant.

The fact that Jack was never caught has made him a legend of evil and, therefore, of absorbing interest to the general public. Why - *how* - did he manage to avoid capture in spite of the fear and outcry of the citizenry, to continue to elude the authorities and their police agents. Was Mr. Ripper, as some have assumed, some sort of criminal genius, a master of crime and black magic? After all, many believed - and would for a long time - that he was a doctor or perhaps a lawyer, a professional and intelligent person.

I see the Ripper as a rather ordinary man with little formal education, based partly on those sneering notes he is alleged to have written to the press and others - some of which were signed "Jack the Ripper." It is not important what he did for a living, but I'd guess he worked at some unskilled occupation - that is, if we rule out his being a butcher or something else where skill with a knife would be required.

Whatever he did, he might have had lodgings in the Whitechapel area and could 'escape' to them with some ease after he had completed a night's maniacal work. Maybe his calling demanded that he be out late, a natural alibi for his comings and goings. Anyway, the killer did *not* wander all over London each time with bloody clothes or hands. He obviously never aroused suspicion or he would have been caught. He probably lived at home - protected by his family, who knew or suspected that he was the Ripper.

In some ways your Ripper was anything but ordinary. First, he knew how to get the confidence - even trust - of what must have been very frightened prostitutes. Perhaps he possessed a devilish charm! Then, for his own safety, he knew how to skilfully choke or render his victim unconscious so that there could be no cry to give him away. And next he'd probably cut their throats from behind so that the blood would not get on his clothes. In one murder, he had only about seven minutes to throttle and cut the victims - the time the police constable took to return on his beat to where Jack in the shadows was doing his thing.

The Ripper fitted naturally into his surroundings - we do not know how, but he surely did - so that, as has been noted, he was able to get away in spite of the great police presence and their stratagems for capturing him.

The question is often asked why Jack the Ripper ceased his murderous activities after the last victim, Mary Jane Kelly - the only one who had her own room - and on whom he kept cutting and slicing for a good two hours. From his 'psychological profile' we know that he would have gone on killing until he was in some way stopped. For that is the way of the sex or serial killer. It is believed that he might have committed suicide, or that his family, knowing of his brutal crimes, had him sent to an asylum.

Then too he may have been satisfied with the thorough job he did on his last victim and so "retired," but this is unlikely, as is the understandable fear that the police were getting too close.

Maybe - just maybe - he was done in by an East End tough who spotted him cruising his next victim. What was another dead body of a nondescript in the area to the police (unless, that is, he was simply thrown into the Thames)? Unlikely, you say? Sure, but as good an explanation as any on the sudden end to the killings *and* the Ripper's disappearance.

Over 100 years of investigation of Jack the Ripper...Will the crimes of that Autumn of Terror ever be solved? I daresay that our present knowledge of the science of forensics, aided by the marvels of the computer, would have probably solved the killings *then*.

And, say, if some new or overlooked pieces of evidence about the identity of Jack the Ripper should come to light, is it possible that while we may never know for certain who the Ripper was, we might still have a fair notion of who he was not. It is then - and only then - that the person known as Jack the Ripper will lose his hold on our interest and imagination. ■

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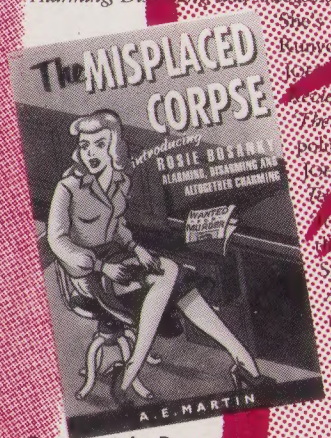

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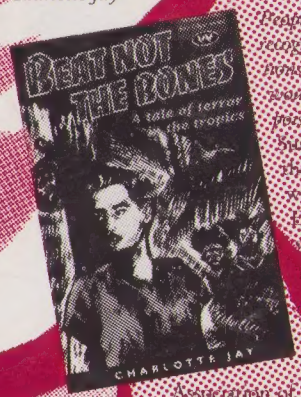

People changed, they were no longer recognisable as Australians. Frustrations and misfortunes [illegible] wounds have deranged [illegible] poisoned the [illegible]

Suicide, [illegible] in Papua [illegible] the luscious vegetation conspires with the [illegible] to [illegible] Eden. Only deep [illegible] where the cold mist [illegible] to the heart of the [illegible]

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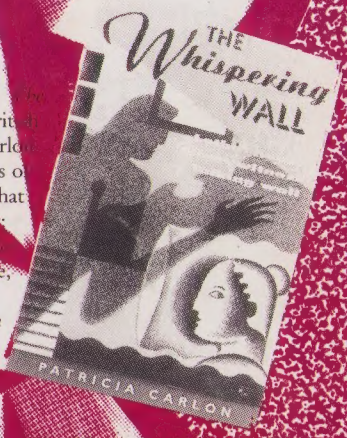

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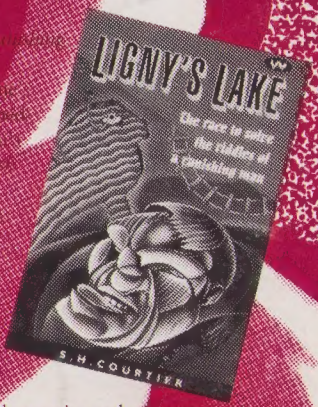

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